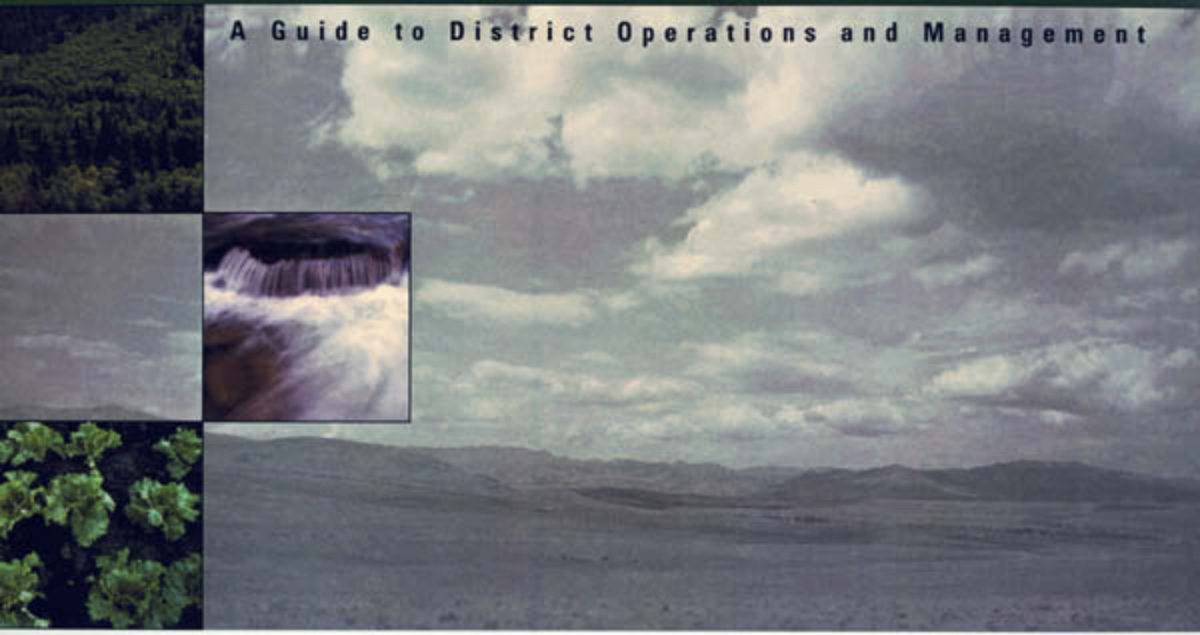
THE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT GUIDEBOOK

A Guide to District Operations and Management



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THE RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT GUIDEBOOK: A GUIDE TO DISTRICT OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT

PRODUCED BY THE CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP
AND THE
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

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PREFACE: HOW TO USE THE RCD *GUIDEBOOK*

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Resource Conservation District (RCD) *Guidebook,* which not only widens the scope of the 1993 *RCD Sourcebook* greatly, it also expands its usefulness. In reviewing the 1993 *Sourcebook* and in listening to requests and recommendations from RCD directors and staff around the state, the *RCD Guidebook* team (a working group of the California Conservation Partnership[1]) decided to greatly expand the concept of the *Sourcebook* to make it much more useable, in several ways.

First, the *Guidebook* is a desk reference, much like the earlier *Sourcebook*. In it you will find information you will need concerning state laws and recommendations governing RCDs, such as Division 9 of the state *Public Resources Code* [2]. Second, the *Guidebook* is also a how-to guide. It systematically takes you through RCD operations and management and provides you with sound advice to move your RCD program forward, one step at a time. Finally, the *Guidebook* is a training tool: it provides you with outlines, instructions, and workshop materials—everything you might need to hold workshops in strategic planning, grant writing, holding effective meetings, and more. The following paragraphs describe in detail how you can use the *Guidebook* to operate and manage your RCD.

THE *GUIDEBOOK* IS A HOW-TO GUIDE

Volume I of the *Guidebook* is founded on many of the source documents, such as Division 9, mentioned above, but it seeks to present this information in a more useable format: a "how-to guide." Directors, managers, and staff of RCDs often ask such questions as, "How do I make sure district meetings are in compliance with the Brown Act?" or, "How should the district create an annual plan?" We have tried to answer questions such as these in an easy to use, logical format.

The nine chapters of Volume I are set up as a sequence of steps: They progress from fundamental issues such as the powers and authorities of RCDs and how to hold district meetings through a step-by-step set of recommendations for planning future district activities, strengthening community involvement, identifying funding sources, educating the public, managing a district on a day-to-day basis, and reporting on district activities.

Obviously, not every RCD will follow this exact sequence in its effort to strengthen its district, but the information contained in these nine steps presents the major provisions of Division 9 and other fundamental documents in a way that is both logical, and, we hope, readable.

Step 1 presents basic information on how to be a district leader. It summarizes the major provisions of Division 9 related to RCDs, provides recommendations for how to structure a district board, and includes brief information on the roles of board members, employees, and contractors.

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[1] A list of California Conservation Partnership working group for training members is included in Appendix Z, RCD Guidebook Development Team.

[2] Throughout the *Guidebook* Division 9 of the *California Public Resources Code* will be referred to simply as "Division 9."

Step 2 provides information on holding district meetings, both to be in legal accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act, and tips for holding successful meetings on a variety of topics.

Step 3 outlines Division 9 requirements for creating district long-range and annual plans, and it provides suggestions for how to implement the strategic planning process to produce a district 5-year plan and associated annual plans.

Step 4 presents community organizing as the starting point for implementing district plans. This step provides suggestions for how to get your community involved in district conservation work.

Step 5 summarizes the main points about funding district plans through government programs. It follows strategic planning and community building as the next logical step in implementing district goals. Although step 5 is closely related to step 6, which offers suggestions for fund raising and grant writing, it highlights government programs that are commonly used to fund district activities.

Step 6 provides a wide range of funding strategies for districts, and it highlights the grant writing process as essential to any district fund raising effort. Central to Step 6 is a grant writing "how-to guide," which present a step by step process for writing, obtaining, and reporting on grants.

Step 7 offers suggestions for district outreach and education programs, and includes strategies for teaching adults, children, and government representatives important ideas about your resource conservation programs.

Step 8 is the "nuts and bolts" chapter on running district operations on a day-to-day basis, included are advice and suggestions on anything from finding affordable office space and equipment to managing projects day to day.

Step 9 concludes the sequence of activities a district might undertake during the course of a year with suggestions for writing district annual reports. Although this chapter focuses on the form and content of annual reports, many of the suggestions offered might pertain to any type of report the district need to create to inform stakeholders of its activities.

Volume I also includes a list of references cited, a bibliography, and a list of acronyms used in the volume.

THE *GUIDEBOOK* IS A TRAINING TOOL

Volume II of the *Guidebook* provides supporting materials for some of the steps in Volume I in the form of workshop materials. Volume II is presented as a curriculum guide for holding training sessions with the public, other agencies, directors, and employees on some of the key issues surrounding the operation and management of districts. Public education in resource conservation is not the only educational task of districts; districts must also educate *themselves* in order to achieve their potential as forceful delivery systems for resource conservation.

Thus, many of the chapters, or "steps," in the *Guidebook* Volume I are presented in Volume II as supporting materials for presenting topics at workshops or other training sessions. For instance, Step 3 in Volume I presents basic information on strategic planning, while Step 3 in Volume II presents a meeting outline and materials for holding the strategic planning sessions themselves. In many cases you may find yourself not only trying to teach yourself about some aspect or procedure of an RCD, but you may find yourself needing to teach others as well.

THE *GUIDEBOOK* IS A DESK REFERENCE

The 1993 *Sourcebook* was designed as a reference tool for finding information on the operation of an RCD. It included major sections on Division 9, guidelines for meetings, and how to hold elections of board directors.

The *Guidebook* keeps important sections of the original *Sourcebook* and adds many more reference materials on topics such as strategic planning, writing annual reports, grant writing, and the Brown Act. These reference materials have been collected into a separate volume of the *Guidebook* (Volume III) in the form of appendices. The appendices contain all of the most detailed information you might need (including the full text of Division 9, among other documents) and are thus designed to be used as reference materials much as in the original *Sourcebook*.

FUTURE CHANGES TO THE *GUIDEBOOK*

We hope you find the *Guidebook* useful, and the *Guidebook* team has worked hard to make it so, but the *Guidebook* is not intended to be a "finished" document. Because it is presented in a loose-leaf format, the design of the *Guidebook* allows it to be updated, corrected, and revised as new information is received (in particular, sections in Volume II will be added as training materials are developed). Please feel free make suggestions for improving both the usefulness and the contents of the *Guidebook* at any time by contacting the California Department of Conservation's Division of Land Resource Protection at (916) 324-0850.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS AN RCD?

Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), once known as Soil Conservation Districts, are "special districts" of the state of California, set up under California law to be locally governed agencies with their own locally appointed or elected, independent boards of directors. Although RCDs are established locally by the rules of a county's Local Agency Formation Committee (LAFCO), and often have close ties to county government, they are not county government entities.

There are numerous types of special districts throughout the state set up to administer needs of local people for pest control, fire fighting, water distribution, and a host of other services. Some special districts are "enterprise" districts and deliver services or products, such as water, to local customers on a fee basis. Other districts, "non-enterprise" districts, deliver services, such as fire or police protection, to all local residents. These are usually supported on a taxation basis. RCDs have characteristics of both enterprise and non-enterprise districts.

Under Division 9 of the California *Public Resources Code*,[1] RCDs are permitted to function to a certain degree as enterprise districts because they are empowered to charge reasonable fees for services rendered. At the same time, certain rules permit RCDs to draw on local taxes for revenues, though the passage of Proposition 13 in 1977 has made it much more difficult for RCDs to function in this way.[2]

Though not governed by the state directly, special districts, among them RCDs, are subject to state law concerning elections, responsibilities, legal meetings, and much more. RCDs, however, are given their primary authority to implement local conservation measures by Division 9. Step 1, How to be an Effective District Leader, sets forth the primary powers and authorities of RCDs as presented in Division 9.

HISTORY OF RCDS

In response to the national "Dust Bowl" crisis of the 1930s, when millions of acres of cropland were destroyed by drought and attendant soil loss, the federal government passed legislation in 1937 establishing the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Conservationists soon realized that a federal agency in Washington may not be sufficiently responsive to local needs, so local counterparts of the SCS were set up under state law to be controlled by local boards of directors. Thus were born "Soil Conservation Districts," which began forming in the late 1930s and quickly spread throughout the 48 states. Soil Conservation Districts began to perform the functions originally envisioned by the formation of the SCS.

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[1] Throughout the *Guidebook* this government code is referred to simply as "Division 9."

[2] The passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 significantly curtailed the ability of districts to derive revenue from new property-tax assessments. New assessments require two-thirds voter approval within the district. Districts receiving property tax revenues prior to Proposition 13 generally continue to receive county-collected property taxes that are proportionate to their pre-Proposition 13 share.

In California, Soil Conservation Districts have been formed in all parts of the state beginning in the 1940s, continuing up to the present. Many have been consolidated over time so that of the hundreds of districts that once existed in California, 103 now remain (see Figure I-1 for a map of current RCDs in California).

Under Division 9, Soil Conservation Districts were originally empowered to manage soil and water resources for conservation, but these powers were expanded in the early 1970s to include "related resources," including fish and wildlife habitat. This expansion of powers was reflected in the change of name from "Soil" Conservation Districts to "Resource" Conservation Districts in 1971.

Today, RCDs manage a diversity of resource conservation projects, including soil and water conservation projects, wildlife habitat enhancement and restoration, control of exotic plant species, watershed restoration, conservation planning, education, and many others. Since most RCDs receive very little regular funding through local taxation, they rely heavily on grants and other types of fundraising to stay in operation.

WHY DO WE NEED RCDS?

Until the formation of Soil Conservation Districts there was no organized mechanism for disseminating resource conservation information, expertise, and assistance. Farmers and ranchers often had no one to turn to for soil and water conservation information and assistance. It took a crisis of national proportions, the Dust Bowl, to bring this about. Farmers and ranchers still need up-to-date scientific information and techniques to manage the natural resources on their properties, and the need for ongoing conservation education and assistance among all sectors of the public is as great or greater than ever.

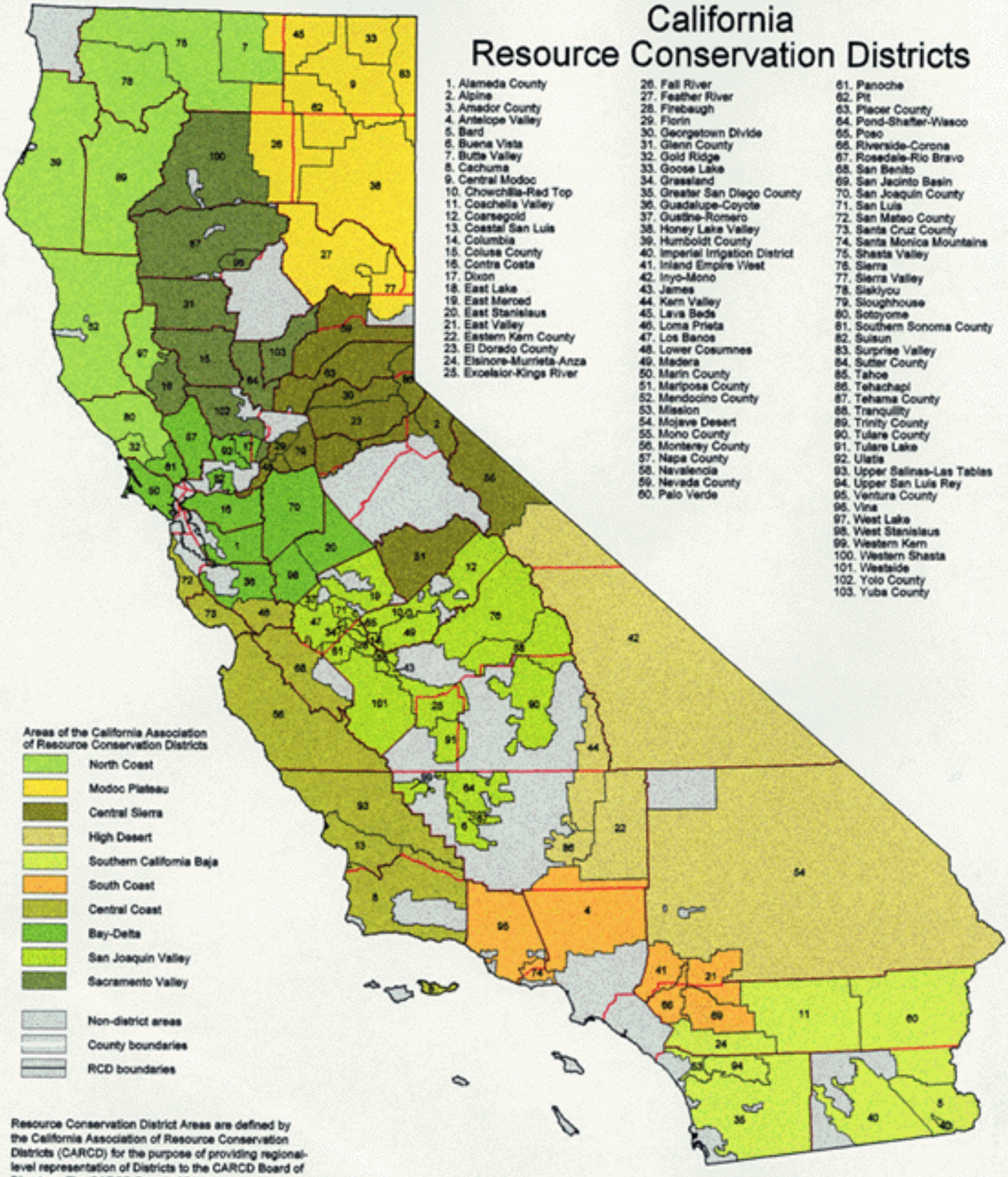
RCDs continue to render assistance to private landowners wishing to conserve soil and water and manage their resources on a sustainable basis. But RCDs also act as a focal point for local conservation efforts, and RCDs throughout the state now function as leaders in the conservation community, including a large amount of watershed groups such as Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) groups in California. RCDs continue to sponsor educational efforts to teach children and adults alike the importance of conserving resources.

Though there are growing contributions by other groups and organizations that raise public awareness of resource conservation, RCDs remain one of the primary links between local people and government on issues related to conservation. With an ever dwindling base of resources and environmental pressures from a host of human activities, the work of RCDs will continue to be needed far into the future.

ORGANIZATION OF RCDS

As stated earlier, RCDs are formed through the auspices of county-based LAFCOs, and county government often exercises limited oversight over RCD boards. At one time, RCD directors were elected on a local basis through county government. With rising costs for holding elections, most RCD directors are now appointed by county boards of supervisors. In many cases district boundaries cross county lines, so responsibility for organizing appointment or election efforts of district board members falls to the county

California
Resource Conservation Districts



1. Alameda County
2. Alpine
3. Amador County
4. Antelope Valley
5. Bard
6. Buena Vista
7. Butte Valley
8. Cachuma
9. Central Modoc
10. Chowchilla-Red Top
11. Coachella Valley
12. Coarsegold
13. Coastal San Luis
14. Columbia
15. Colusa County
16. Contra Costa
17. Dixon
18. East Lake
19. East Merced
20. East Stanislaus
21. East Valley
22. Eastern Kern County
23. El Dorado County
24. Elsinore-Murrieta-Anza
25. Excelsior-Kings River
26. Fall River
27. Feather River
28. Firebaugh
29. Florin
30. Georgetown Divide
31. Glenn County
32. Gold Ridge
33. Goose Lake
34. Grassland
35. Greater San Diego County
36. Guadalupe-Coyote
37. Gustine-Romero
38. Honey Lake Valley
39. Humboldt County
40. Imperial Irrigation District
41. Inland Empire West
42. Inyo-Mono
43. James
44. Kern Valley
45. Lava Beds
46. Loma Prieta
47. Los Banos
48. Lower Cosumnes
49. Madera
50. Marin County
51. Mariposa County
52. Mendocino County
53. Mission
54. Mojave Desert
55. Mono County
56. Monterey County
57. Napa County
58. Navalencia
59. Nevada County
60. Palo Verde
61. Panoche
62. Pit
63. Placer County
64. Pond-Shafter-Wasco
65. Poso
66. Riverside-Corona
67. Rosedale-Rio Bravo
68. San Benito
69. San Jacinto Basin
70. San Joaquin County
71. San Luis
72. San Mateo County
73. Santa Cruz County
74. Santa Monica Mountains
75. Shasta Valley
76. Sierra
77. Sierra Valley
78. Siskiyou
79. Sloughhouse
80. Sotoyome
81. Southern Sonoma County
82. Suisun
83. Surprise Valley
84. Sutter County
85. Tahoe
86. Tehachapi
87. Tehama County
88. Tranquility
89. Trinity County
90. Tulare County
91. Tulare Lake
92. Ulatis
93. Upper Salinas-Las Tablas
94. Upper San Luis Rey
95. Ventura County
96. Vina
97. West Lake
98. West Stanislaus
99. Western Kern
100. Western Shasta
101. Westside
102. Yolo County
103. Yuba County

Areas of the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts

- North Coast
- Modoc Plateau
- Central Sierra
- High Desert
- Southern California Baja
- South Coast
- Central Coast
- Bay-Delta
- San Joaquin Valley
- Sacramento Valley

- Non-district areas
- County boundaries
- RCD boundaries

Resource Conservation District Areas are defined by the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) for the purpose of providing regional-level representation of Districts to the CARCD Board of Directors. The CARCD Board of Directors provides leadership for the Association as an instrument of its member Districts in carrying out state-level soil and water conservation policies. The Association also provides policy input to state and federal agencies and to other conservation and agricultural organizations. The boundaries of individual Districts and CARCD Areas represented on this map reflect all changes to January 1, 1998.

0 100 200 km
scale

Map compiled and produced by the California Department of Conservation, Land Conservation Unit. Sources for Resource Conservation District (RCD) boundaries and RCD Areas include the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service; individual RCD offices; and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts. County lines produced by the Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program from United States Geological Survey 1:100,000 scale topographic quadrangle maps.

with the most district area within its boundaries. Some counties have more than one district within county boundaries.

District boards, however, function independently of county government, and they derive their powers and purposes from state law. Division 9 enables districts to have 5, 7, or 9 directors, who serve as voting members of the board of directors. Decisions or actions of an RCD board are approved by majority vote of the full board (see Step 2, How to Hold Legal and Effective Meetings, "Quorum," for more information on the board as a decision-making body).

Board members are appointed or elected on their strengths as active partners in the conservation community, and, most frequently, board members are private landowners within a district with interest in conserving resources on their own lands. Boards are meant, however, to represent a broad spectrum of resource conservation interests and perspectives. Board members often differ in their interests and conservation philosophies, yet the structure of a board offers a way for local districts to forge coherent conservation policies and programs that balance diverse interests and represent the broader spectrum of opinions within a community.

RCD boards, under state law, meet publicly once a month to debate about local conservation issues, and make decisions or take actions on these issues. Boards also frequently employ specialists and contractors to carry out board policies and projects, and, as mentioned earlier, these may address a broad array of conservation issues. Board members implement district policies and programs on a volunteer basis (board members cannot be paid for their services to RCDs). As such, district directors often serve as conservation educators to landowners, schools, and the public to raise awareness of conservation in the local community.

Directors also educate and inform state government representatives to rally support for resource conservation locally and on a state-wide basis. One of the primary means RCDs use to organize representation at the state and national levels is through the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), a non-profit organization set up to serve the districts of California. Through CARCD *Areas*, districts coordinate their efforts to raise awareness of conservation issues on a broader geographic level by meeting with other districts in their area. They share information and coordinate representation to state and federal government entities (see Figure I-1 for a map of CARCD Areas).

CORE FUNCTIONS OF RCDS

RCDs are empowered to conserve natural resources within their districts by implementing projects on public and private lands and to educate landowners and the public about resource conservation. Beyond this, RCDs are given the right to form associations to coordinate resource conservation efforts on a larger level. The core functions of a district revolve around its right to use diverse means to further resource conservation within its district (see Step One, How to be an Effective District Leader, for more information).

A good example of an association of RCDs is CARCD, which coordinates assistance to RCDs in the state, offers a structure for RCDs to meet and set priorities, and represents the interests of California RCDs to state and federal representatives. CARCD's

governing board is made up of area representatives from each of the 10 California regions (see Figure I-1). The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) performs similar functions as CARCD for conservation districts (including resource conservation districts) at the national level.

DIVISION 9, THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, AND RCDS

As a portion of the state Public Resources Code, Division 9 outlines the structures, powers, and authorities of RCDs under state law. It also provides for state-level support of RCDs through the state Department of Conservation.[3] The Department of Conservation does not have regulatory oversight of RCDs; the department serves districts through offering ongoing training on Division 9 and related government codes, providing technical assistance through education, as well as offering some financial assistance to districts through competitive grant awards.

RELATIONSHIP OF RCDS AND NRCS

The relationship between RCDs and the US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly known as the "SCS," has been long standing. As noted above, the NRCS was originally formed to address the crisis of the Dust Bowl, and the legislation establishing local conservation districts was created shortly thereafter. Since then, NRCS and RCDs have had a close working relationship within districts, with NRCS appointing a local district conservationist to provide technical assistance to districts, as well as acting as a liaison between the district and federal programs. Local offices of the NRCS also frequently employ other specialists, such as soil conservationists and engineers, to provide technical assistance to the district.

RCDs and NRCS formally ratified their relationship through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed more than fifty years ago to establish a partnership and mutual roles between districts and the USDA. In 1994 the MOU was revised "to modernize and reinvent their historic partnership," and to add state conservation agencies to the agreement.

Recently, several new documents were created to supplement this MOU and to further define the roles of the partners. In line with this, a Mutual Agreement (set up under PL 103-354) was drafted to provide each district an opportunity to enter into a formal agreement with NRCS, state agencies, and tribes. It establishes a framework for cooperation between the various partners (for a sample Mutual Agreement, See Appendix D, Partnership Agreements).

Another tool California RCDs have for federal, state, and local partnerships is a Cooperative Working Agreement between the NRCS, individual RCDs, CARCD, and the California Department of Conservation. The purpose of the agreement is to supplement the Mutual Agreement and document "areas of common interest of the State, Federal, and Local partnership in natural resources conservation." It reinforces the idea of "locally led conservation," with individual districts being responsible for "exerting leadership to identify local resource needs, advocate for effective solutions and work with appropriate

[3] Division 9 originally set up oversight of resource conservation in the state through a state Resource Conservation Commission, which was dismantled during the late 1970s. Responsibility for this role fell to the Department of Conservation thereafter.

parties on implementation." This agreement underscores in particular the relationships between a district and other government entities. RCDs are primarily responsible for providing leadership and local policies within districts, with assistance of many kinds coming from state and federal government (see Appendix D, Partnership Agreements, for a copy of this Cooperative Working Agreement).

Finally, provisions were set up for an Operating Agreement between individual districts and any local entities involved with natural resource concerns. The Operating Agreement can be developed at the local level to address local needs: "It is initiated by the district board, revisited annually, can replace annual work plans, defines roles and responsibilities at the local level, and provides opportunities to establish and review district priorities. It is signed by the district and others as deemed necessary by the district."[4]

RELATIONSHIPS OF RCDS TO OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS

RCDs in California as a whole have no formal relationship with other federal, state, and private entities, though Division 9 encourages individual districts to form partnerships with any entities it might need to. Typically, other agencies such the US Environmental Protection Agency at the federal level, or California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection at the state level, willingly enter into agreements with individual districts to collaborate on projects. A district's role regardless of potential partnerships is to identify resource conservation needs within a district and plan for solutions. Division 9 encourages districts to invite representatives of other entities to provide input during the strategic planning process and form partnerships to achieve conservation district objectives. Districts typically enter into contracts (grant contracts or cost share agreements) to accomplish work both partners in the agreement see as mutually beneficial to resources in the district. For a sample partnership agreement, see Appendix D.

[4] From a fact sheet published by the USDA NRCS in July 1995 detailing the provisions of the revised MOU and associated documents discussed above. For a copy of this fact sheet, see Appendix D, Partnership Agreements.

STEP 1
HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE DISTRICT LEADER

INTRODUCTION

As discussed in the introduction, Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) derive their powers and authorities from Division 9 of the *California Public Resources Code*. RCDs are special districts, political subdivisions of the State of California. A full text of Division 9 can be found in Appendix B. You can gain an overview of the basic powers and authorities an RCD can use to develop its local conservation program by learning some of the primary roles outlined for RCDs in Division 9 and summarized in the paragraphs below.

POWERS AND AUTHORITIES OF RCDS UNDER DIVISION 9

Managing

Under the authority granted it by Division 9 an RCD may:

- *Manage District Operations*. This includes managing the day-to-day business of an RCD, including its budget and other financial matters.

- *Manage Projects Within Districts On Public And Private Lands*. Division 9 gives RCDs authority to oversee and manage soil, water, and other natural resource conservation projects on both public and private lands. RCDs are not regulatory agencies; they build cooperative, voluntary partnerships with landowners and land managers and enter into agreements to provide resource conservation services to the landowner or land manager. RCDs offer a valuable service to landowners and land managers by providing leadership and know-how to help them conserve resources.

- *Make Improvements on Private and Public Lands*. With consent of landowners and land managers, RCDs are granted authority to implement projects in order to conserve soil, water, and other valuable natural resources on both private and public lands.

- *Acquire Lands, Easements, and Property*. RCDs are also given authority under Division 9 to purchase and hold lands, easements, and property. An RCD can purchase land in need of extensive conservation treatments, especially when ownership of the land will help in managing it. An RCD can also purchase easements, such as riparian zones, to manage for the purposes of conserving resources. An RCD may also purchase and own structures, equipment, and tools in order to undertake resource conservation work.

Cooperating to Plan, Receive Funding, and Deliver Services

One of the primary ways an RCD broadens its ability to conserve resources is by forming partnerships with other districts, with the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD); CARCD Area members; federal, state, and local governments; and Indian Tribes.

- *Partner with other Districts, CARCD, CARCD Areas*. Forming partnerships strengthens district operations by giving an RCD access to information, knowledge, and skills. In addition, partnerships for the purposes of resource conservation planning can identify common interests between partners to facilitate sharing of expertise and resources. Often, funding agencies make grants to entities working in partnership with other agencies and organizations because they see this as a way of stretching limited grant dollars and achieving the most with limited funds.

- *Cooperate with Federal, State, and Local Governments and Tribes*. Division 9 gives RCDs the authority to enter into agreements with federal, state and local governments as well as Indian tribes to collaborate on resource conservation projects within districts. In addition, RCDs are empowered to receive grants and other funding from government agencies.

Coordinating Representation to Federal, State, and Local Governments

RCDs are given latitude to form partnerships with other districts, CARCD, and CARCD Areas to educate and inform government decision makers, such as legislators, about the strengths of RCDs for local conservation efforts. With the frequent turnover in legislative office holders, educating elected officials about RCDs is an ongoing effort. Important also is keeping government apprised of the latest developments in resource conservation programs, as well as the basic strengths of districts to promote sound conservation practices. RCDs are spoken of as “California’s Best Kept Secret,” yet the full potential of what an RCD can achieve will only be reached when elected officials become aware of what districts can do. A constant effort to keep RCDs in the minds of decision makers has been and will be an ongoing need both by districts and district associations.

Performing Education and Outreach

- *Conduct Surveys and Research, Disseminate Information*. Division 9 empowers RCDs to act as clearinghouses of conservation education and to disseminate this information to local government, schools, and the public. Part of this effort may be to conduct basic research, including scientific research and surveys of public knowledge and opinion, and to relay this information to the public.

- *Perform Education, Outreach, and Demonstration Projects*. In order to educate, RCDs are given the power to directly educate the public through any number of means, including media, publications, or public events such as demonstration projects.

Accepting Funding

In order to accomplish valuable resource conservation work RCDs need funding. Division 9 has given RCDs authority to receive monies from various sources and to spend it on resource conservation within districts. RCDs have latitude to accept funding or raise money in many ways. Division 9, however, prohibits RCDs from using water to generate electrical power: “The districts shall not conserve water for power purposes or

produce or distribute power for their own use or for the use of others" (§9001(c)).[1] Under Division 9 RCDs are allowed to:

- *Accept Grants and Gifts*. Grants come in many forms from many sources, but all provide districts with funding to execute resource conservation work within districts, either directly through funding for projects, or indirectly through capacity building funding or educational grants. RCDs may also receive gifts of money to undertake conservation work within districts.

- *Receive Funding through Federal, State, and Private Sources*. RCDs may receive federal and state funding through various governmental agencies and from private foundations who wish to support the work of RCDs.

- *Establish Fees for Services*. RCDs may charge reasonable fees for performing services, such as providing labor or equipment to assist with conservation projects.

- *Accept and Use Contributions*. RCDs may receive and use monetary contributions from individuals, charitable organizations, or other groups. Such contributions are usually made without connections to specific projects and an RCD may use such money to cover basic operations or to purchase equipment.

Acting as an Employer

RCDs can hire employees and others to perform district work. Under Division 9, an RCD may:

- *Employ Agents, Officers, and Employees*. RCDs may hire agents, officers, and employees to carry out the goals and objectives of the district. An RCD can hire permanent and temporary employees, and delegate some district functions to paid staff (see also below, "Employees and Contractors").

- *Employ Contractors*. An RCD may employ contractors to accomplish specific tasks associated with projects or district operations. Frequently utilized contractors include scientists, equipment contractors, registered professional foresters, and computer specialists (see also below, "Employees and Contractors").

Exercising Legal Powers

An RCD is a type of special district, organized under authority of the state and as such is subject to legal powers and conditions similar to other state entities. This means that an RCD may:

- *Sue and be Sued*. As a special district of the state, an RCD is not exempt from legal action. An RCD may be sued for its actions or the actions of individual board

[1] Since most article references in the Guidebook are to Division 9, plain numerical article designations (for example, "§9151) refer to Division 9; other reference sources are stated with the code designation spelled out (for example, "Government Code §54151"). Except where noted, citations marked with the article sign (§) refer to Division 9 *(*included here in Volume III, Appendix B).

members. It may also bring lawsuits against individuals or entities (see also Step 8, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations, "Insurance and Liability").

- *Call upon District Attorney or County Counsel for Legal Advice*. Under Division 9 RCDs are given a right to have legal guidance, either from a local district attorney or county counsel.

Creating and Executing Conservation Plans

Planning is an important part of resource conservation, and Division 9 recommends that RCDs survey the conservation needs in their districts and devise plans to address them.

- *Develop Long-Range and Annual Plans*. Division 9 gives RCDs authority to survey resource conservation needs within a district and to create long-range plans to address them. They are further empowered to form partnerships with other government entities and other groups for the purposes of planning. The California Legislature has worked to encourage RCDs to create short- and long-range plans, and passed legislation requiring that districts do so by January 1, 2000 in order to qualify for state funding through the Department of Conservation.

THE ROLE OF A RESOURCE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

The role of an RCD is to "take available technical, financial, and educational resources, whatever their source, and focus or coordinate them so that they meet the needs of the local land user and local communities for conservation of soil, water, and related resources."[2]

THE OVERALL FUNCTION OF AN RCD BOARD

The overall function of an RCD board of directors is to provide resource conservation leadership to people and communities within the district. The primary role of an RCD board is that of a decision-making body to set policy, create and implement plans, and educate the public about resource conservation issues.

SPECIFIC ROLES OF AN RCD BOARD

The following list of items presents some of the primary roles of an RCD board to perform the functions of an RCD:

- Identify local conservation needs, and develop, implement, and evaluate programs to meet them

- Educate and inform landowners and operators, the general public, and local, state, and federal legislators on conservation issues and programs

- Supervise other volunteers and paid staff working with the district

[2] From a fact sheet published by the National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) Capacity Building Center, Pullman, WA.

- Coordinate with other agency personnel
- Administer the district by delegating tasks through the structure of board officers and members, committees, and employees
- Raise and budget district funds
- Report on activities to the public
- Coordinate assistance and funding from federal, state and local government; district associations; and private groups

COMMON BOARD STRUCTURES

Division 9 states that "the board of directors of a district shall manage and conduct the business and affairs of the district" (§9401). The powers of a district thus reside in the board as a whole, not in individual directors: "the powers shall be exercised and the duties performed by the directors acting as a body and not as individuals" (§9023). The board as a whole makes decisions (by majority vote) on issues relating to resource conservation in a district, but individual directors or groups of directors in the form of committees may study issues and make recommendations to the full board for action or policy setting. To a certain extent, roles of individual board members and the use of board structures such as committees are left open for boards to determine, so long as decisions on actions and policies are decided by vote of the full board in a meeting that is open to public attendance and participation. [3]

The following paragraphs list board structures proven to be effective in the management of districts. These are outlined in publications such as Bader and Carr's *Board Leadership and Development: Enhancing the Effectiveness of Boards, Councils, and Committees*, a publication recognized by the National Association of Conservation Districts as providing guidance in board operations. Similar recommendations are made by the California Special District Association's *Sample Policy Handbook*. Information on acquiring copies of these publications is presented in Appendix W, Contact Information.

Size of the Board

Division 9 requires that an RCD Board consist of either 5, 7, or 9 members (§9301).

[3] One recommendation for clearly outlining the roles of board members, committees, and employees is for the district to create a policy for these roles. An important component of director/employee policies is the need for directors and employees alike to treat one another with respect and to engage in the business of the district using high standards of professionalism. For more information on employee policies, as well as related subjects, such as position descriptions, hiring and firing, and standards of conduct, see Step 8, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations.

Officers[4]

President

The board president, or "chair," has these specific roles to play:

1. *Develop and Distribute Meeting Agendas*. The president oversees the development of the agenda for regular public board meetings (held, usually, once a month). S/he may do this with input from others such as directors, district conservationists, Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D) directors, and district employees. The agenda is mailed to interested parties and board members, and it is posted publicly in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Brown Act (see Step 2, "How to Hold Legal and Effective Meetings," and Appendices F and G for discussion of the Brown Act).

2. *Preside at all meetings*. The board president presides over all board meetings unless absent. The vice president presides whenever the board president is absent.

3. *During meetings, to act as facilitator for orderly discussion*. The president or chair ensures that standard parliamentary procedure is followed during meeting discussions. The president usually keeps his or her comments to a minimum, but allows and encourages others to speak. Use of standard parliamentary procedure is presented in Step 2, How to Hold Legal and Effective Meetings.

4. *Suggest or ask for motions*. The board president may suggest that motions be made and may make them him/herself.

5. *Re-state motions, ask for votes on motions, and announce the outcome of votes.*

6. *Appoint committees, assign responsibilities, and ask for reports when due*.

7. *Train and inform new board members.*

8. *Provide direct supervision to district employees or to the district manager.*

Vice President

The board vice president has these specific roles to play:

1. *Preside at board meetings when the president is absent.*
2. *Assume the other duties of the president when asked by the president.*

Secretary

The board secretary has these specific roles to play:

1. *Oversee the preparation and distribution of meeting agendas under direction of the president.*

[4] *Simplified Parliamentary Procedure*, a brochure by the National Association of Conservation Districts, was used to develop this section on officers.

2. *Keep a list of suggested agenda items for the president to use when developing the agenda.*

3. *Keep minutes for each meeting*. Guidelines for keeping meeting minutes are presented in Step 2, "How to Hold Legal and Effective Meetings."

4. *Record committee activities.* Keep records of committees and committee members both standing and special. Notify committee members of their appointment to committees if they were not present.

5. *Initiate correspondence on behalf of the board as needed*.

Treasurer

The board treasurer has these specific roles to play:

1. *Maintain complete and accurate records of receipts and expenditures for the district.*

2. *Issue receipts for all monies received and pay bills when authorized and approved by the board.*

3. *Make sure all authorized payments are recorded in the minutes*.

4. *Make a monthly financial report to the board*.

5. *Make an annual financial statement in the annual report to the public of all district funds*.

6. *Deposit checks in the district account*.

Directors[5]

The role of an individual RCD director is vital to overall board operations. Thus, the role of an RCD board member is to:

> *serve on a multi-member board that establishes and implements programs to protect and conserve soil, water, prime and unique farmland, rangeland, woodland, wildlife, energy and other renewable resources on local, non-federal lands.*[6]

[5] §9352 requires that the following qualifications to be met by prospective directors and associate directors:

(a) Directors shall be registered voters in the state.

(b) Directors shall (1) reside within the district and either own real property in the district or alternatively have served, pursuant to the district's rules, for two years or more as an associate director providing advisory or other assistance to the board of directors, or (2) be a designated agent of a resident landowner within the district.

[6] From a fact sheet by the NACD Capacity Building Center, Pullman, WA.

An individual director's powers are based on his or her role as a board member: The board makes decisions, creates plans, and implements actions. Directors gather information and present recommendations to the full board, which the board can then discuss and take action on. Some responsibilities of a board may be delegated to committees to gather information and make recommendations to the full board. Often, boards appoint committees such as budget, education, planning, personnel, and fundraising committees. Such committees are not decision-making bodies: only the full board (or a at least a quorum[7]) can make decisions to take action or set policies.

Board members cannot be paid for work done on behalf of the board, nor can they be employed as contractors or other service providers while serving on the board. Board members may be reimbursed, however, for expenses incurred while travelling to carry out district business. Reimbursement amounts are set by the board in a board travel policy.

In line with the prohibition against payment to board members for services is the requirement for directors to avoid potential conflicts of interest and to disclose actual or potential conflicts before their appointment: "No director or other officer of the district shall be interested directly or indirectly in the sale of equipment, materials, or services to the district" (§9304). The degree to which directors must disclose assets or business interests in a conflict of interest statement is determined by each county. Typically, directors sign an agreement not to engage in conflicts of interest, and these agreements are kept on file by the county in which the district resides. For more information on conflict of interest disclosure, see Appendix E.

An RCD director has these specific roles to play:

1. *Attend regular board meetings*.

2. *Listen to, discuss, and vote on board motions to make decisions and take actions*.

3. *Assume duties and carry out tasks assigned by the president, including duties associated with membership in committees*.

4. *Assist other board members as required*.

5. *Be familiar with all board programs*.

6. *Be prepared to serve in one of the board officer positions*.

Associate Directors

Associate directors are not voting members of the board. The position of associate director has been established to allow members of the community opportunities to participate in RCD activities when they do not meet the stricter requirements for directors, such as owning property in the district. Under Division 9, however, associate

[7] A "quorum" is a majority of board members, whether or not they are actually present (for example, three of five members voting for or against a motion). For more information on board voting procedures, see Step 2, How to Hold Legal and Effective Meetings, Part 1: Legal Meetings, "Quorum."

directors may qualify for board positions after they have served for a period of time as associate directors.[8]

An associate director has these specific roles to play:

1. *Assist with field days, field tours, annual meetings, contests, educational activities, and other special events*.

2. *Serve in advisory capacity to the board*. Associate directors may not vote on district business or assume the official responsibilities of board members.

Committees

Establishing committees is one way for a board to delegate work on some activities. Committees take the form of "standing" and "a*d hoc*" committees. Standing committees are formed to address the ongoing work of the district, and, though membership may sometimes change, they remain in existence to serve an ongoing advisory role for the board. The following is a list of common standing committees used by district boards:

- Education
- Budget
- Fundraising
- Public Relations
- Legislative

Ad hoc—or "special" —committees are formed in response to specific tasks, problems, or needs. Once a task is accomplished, the *ad hoc* committee is dissolved. An example might be an *ad hoc* committee formed to plan a field tour for a visiting government official. The committee plans the tour and associated events, directs the tour, but when the event is over, the *ad hoc* committee is dissolved.

Employees and Contractors

Under Division 9 a district board is empowered to hire employees and to contract with others on a limited basis to complete certain tasks: "The directors may execute all necessary contracts. They may employ such agents, officers, and employees as may be necessary, prescribe their duties, and fix their compensation" (§9404). Employees may undertake certain functions of a district under direction of the board, but employees may not perform the official duties of a board member such as make or vote on motions, preside over board meetings, call special meetings, or create agendas.

Employees may be delegated tasks associated with board secretaries and treasurers, and they may perform some of the activities associated with committees. For example, an employee may assume the roles an education committee might normally perform,

[8] Division 9 §9352 states that associate directors must "serve, pursuant to the district's rules, two years or more" before they can become full directors. After this term of service associate directors are qualified for regular director under Division 9, if the board chooses to appoint them to this position, even if they do not own or manage property in the district. Associate directors moving to full director positions still need to meet the other requirements for directors in Division 9 such as being registered voters in the district.

which are to collect and evaluate information and make recommendations to the board on educational matters. The employee might also coordinate, oversee, or implement educational activities or programs the board decides are worthwhile. The same is true for district financial activities and record keeping: an employee may be assigned the role of preparing the monthly and annual budgets or, in turn, keeping and documenting minutes of board meetings.

Contractors differ from employees in the way that standing committees differ from *ad hoc* committees: while employees are hired to perform ongoing functions of a district such as record keeping or education, contractors are hired for a limited time in order to complete *specific* tasks; once those tasks are completed, the contractor is no longer employed by the district, at least until such time as they enter into another contract with the district. Care needs to be taken with contracting to meet requirements as defined by the Internal Revenue Service Code. For more information on contracting, see Step 9, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations, Part Three: Contracting and Subcontracting.

STEP 2
HOW TO HOLD LEGAL AND EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

INTRODUCTION

According to §9308, the board shall hold regular monthly meetings. Regular meetings help ensure that the district communicates its message consistently and that the public has a chance to participate in resource conservation decision making. At meetings, the board makes decisions about conservation policies and monitors implementation of resource conservation plans. The sections that follow summarize the legal requirements for meetings and offer suggestions for holding effective meetings.

PART ONE: LEGAL MEETINGS

Part one of this chapter outlines the legal requirements for district meetings as expressed in Division 9 and the California Open Meeting Law. As public agencies, Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs) are required by law to conform to standards set for all government entities. These requirements pertain to meetings where a majority of the board meets to make decisions. Typically, these will be monthly board meetings or special board meetings, although other instances apply (see Appendices F and G for more information). In addition, the basics of these requirements, as well standard procedures for parliamentary proceedings based on *Robert's Rules of Order,* are outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of board members who must be present for formal actions of the board to be valid. According to §9312 a majority of directors on a board constitutes a quorum (e.g., three members of a five-member board). In order to pass a motion, at least the number constituting a quorum must concur (e.g., if three, four, or five members of a five-member board are present, at least three members must concur in order to pass a motion). Notwithstanding this restriction, a number less than a quorum may adjourn a meeting. Table 2-1 presents requirements for quorums depending on board size.

Figure 2-1. Quorums for Corresponding Board Sizes

Number of Board Members	Number Needed for Quorum	Number Yes Votes Needed to Pass Motions
5	3	3
7	4	4
9	5	5

California Open Meeting Law (Brown Act)

The Ralph M. Brown Act, known as the "California Open Meeting Law" or the "Brown Act," is intended to ensure that decisions affecting the public are made publicly. Under the Brown Act (Government Code §54950 et seq.), state government exists to serve Californians, and cannot decide for the public what information is good and what

information is not good for them to know. The people must remain apprised of government's activities to retain control over the agencies that serve them. The Brown Act protects citizens from potential abuses by local and state public agencies. It safeguards the people's right to observe and comment on local governmental decisions that may affect themselves, their homes, businesses, organizations, and communities (*Open and Public II,* 1994[1]).

The Brown Act underwent revisions in January 1999. Appendices F and G contain a summary of the Brown Act, compiled by Michael Jenkins,[2] as well as the full text of the most recent revision of the Brown Act. A user's guide to the Brown Act entitled, *Open and Public II* (Capital Inquiry 1993), explains the Brown Act in plain language. This publication includes hypothetical examples of common situations where the Brown Act may apply.

The following paragraphs summarize the Brown Act's key statutes. They are intended to illustrate the general purposes of the Brown Act. However, other aspects of the Brown Act may also be important. Therefore, RCD board members and staff are advised to read the present information as a primer and refer to the summary or the actual text of the Brown Act for more specific information.

Public Notification of Meetings

The Brown Act is intended to protect the public, the district, and district employees. Local officials must make public any decision made, policy enacted, topic discussed, or project funded that affects a community, city, county, school, or local organization. This allows people to monitor public agencies for abuses that could adversely affect them or society at large.

Notifying the public is only required by the Brown Act if a quorum of board members is present. A quorum is the minimum number of members that must be present for business transactions to be valid (see also “Quorum” above). If this quorum requirement is not met, then the Brown Act does not apply to the group meeting. However, if two members meet privately to discuss a policy, then one of the members meets with a third member to discuss the same issue, and then the third meets with a fourth, and so on, the Brown Act applies. Such closed, serial meetings are in violation of the Brown Act because a quorum is eventually involved.

Also, public notification applies to standing advisory committees comprised solely of board members even if they number less than a quorum (Government Code §54952). To be a standing committee, a group must have "continuing subject matter jurisdiction" or a regular meeting schedule formally adopted by the board.

Public Access to Meetings

All meetings of the legislative bodies of local agencies shall be open and public (Government Code §54953). §9313 *also* requires districts to ensure that meetings, as well as records, remain open to the public. However, certain exceptions to this open

[1] Full citations for publications mentioned in Volume I are listed under “References Cited” at the end of this volume.
[2] Used by permission of Richards, Watson, and Gershon, Attorneys-at-Law.

meeting requirement do exist to protect the district (see below, “Closed Sessions” and “Privacy for Employees”). Furthermore, no conditions shall be placed on a person's attendance at a meeting (Government Code §54953.3). For example, the district cannot insist that a person wishing to attend a meeting register his/her name, provide information, or complete a questionnaire. However, this information can be requested on a voluntary basis. To ensure that people have the opportunity to attend, the district shall indicate the time and place for holding regular meetings (Government Code §5495). This information shall be provided by ordinance, resolution, bylaws, or whatever rule is required for the conduct of business.

The Brown Act also ensures that the public is informed of decisions by requiring the district to allow anyone to speak during meetings (Government Code §54954.3). Usually this opportunity is provided during an open-discussion period at the end of the meeting. Topics must be within the jurisdiction of the district (e.g., creek restoration is appropriate, but school busing is not). In addition, the board cannot prohibit public criticism of the board or the district (Government Code §54954.3). The Brown Act does not exempt lunch, dinner, social events, or retreats where the board discusses or takes action on district business. The public must be informed any time such matters are discussed, *wherever* they are discussed, even if no action results.

The Use of Agendas

The district must create and post an agenda for any regular meeting, including closed sessions (Government Code §54954.2). The agenda must include a brief, general description of each item of business to be transacted or discussed at the meeting. The board must post this agenda at least 72 hours before each regular meeting.

The district cannot take action or discuss any items not on the agenda (Government Code §54954.2), except for board members responding to statements or questions posed by persons addressing the board. If an emergency or a need to take immediate action on an item came to the board's attention after posting of the agenda, the board may take action on necessary non-agenda items for reasons of emergency, but these must be properly motioned, seconded, and approved.

Closed Sessions

Certain district activities, such as litigation, security maintenance, and personnel performance reviews, may need to be discussed in private. Therefore, the Brown Act allows districts to conduct closed meetings where confidential topics are discussed (Government Code §54956.8, §54956.9, §54957). Circumstances when the board may hold a closed session include: negotiating government-property transactions; conferring with its legal counsel regarding pending litigation against the district; discussing a threat of the security to public buildings or to the public's right of access to public services or public facilities; or considering the appointment, employment, evaluation of performance, or dismissal of a public employee.

However, the board must disclose the items to be discussed in a closed session (Government Code §54957.7). Prior to holding the closed session, the board shall convene an open meeting to disclose the items to be discussed in the closed session. Also, after the closed session, the board shall reconvene an open session prior to adjournment to disclose any actions taken during the closed session.

The district must disclose certain closed-session discussions or actions. The board must publicly report certain actions taken (Government Code §54957.1). These include approval of an agreement concluding real estate negotiations; approval given to legal counsel to defend, seek, or refrain from seeking litigation; approval given to legal counsel to settle pending litigation; disposition of claims discussed in closed session; an action which affects the employment status of an employee; and approval of an agreement concluding labor negotiations. The district may report this information orally or in writing.

A district that meets unlawfully can be penalized. If board action is taken in violation of the Brown Act, the district can be found guilty of a misdemeanor (Government Code §54959). If no action was taken during an unlawful meeting, the district could face civil rather than criminal proceedings. There is no specific agency responsible for enforcing violations of the Brown Act. Violations are enforced by threat of litigation against the offending public body. An RCD should be aware that if it is sued and found to be in violation of the Brown Act, the district may be required to pay for the plaintiff's attorney fees and court costs. Successful civil charges have either changed an illegal practice or opened access to meetings which had been previously closed.

Violations of the Brown Act may not necessarily invalidate an action taken (Government Code §54960.1). An action will not be considered void if it was taken in substantial compliance with the Brown Act.

Privacy for Employees

The Brown Act protects an employee from a public examination of his/her job performance. The board must provide written notification to an employee of his/her right to have complaints against her/him heard in an open session (Government Code §54957). The notice must be given at least 24 hours in advance of such a meeting. If the notice should not be given, any action taken against the employee would be null and void, and could be the basis for litigation against the board.

Rules of Order in Meetings

The following rules of order are adapted from Policy 5070 of the *California Special Districts Association Sample Policy Handbook* (1992). They should be applied to action items brought before and considered by the board. Rules of order in meetings are based on standard parliamentary procedure as presented in *Robert's Rules of Order*. [3] These rules are not inflexible; they may be amended at any time during a meeting if certain procedures are followed (see "Changes to Procedure," below).

Decorum

Decorum means both propriety and good taste in conduct as well as orderliness. Both should prevail in public board meetings. During board meetings and public hearings, the president takes whatever actions are necessary to ensure that decorum is preserved. The president may eject any person making personal, impertinent, or slanderous remarks. Any person refusing to abide by a request by the president or disrupting the

[3] Summarized in an NACD brochure, "Simplified Parliamentary Procedure."

meeting or hearing may also be ejected from the meeting.

Procedures for Discussing Action Items

Before a subject is open for debate, three steps must be completed. First, a board member must make a motion. Any board member may do so. A motion is a formal proposal that suggests that the district take an action desired by the person making the motion. Next, another board member must "second" the motion. Again, any board member, except the person who made the motion, may do so. Seconding a motion means that the member regards the motion appropriate for consideration by the board. Last, the president must state, or announce, the motion to the assembly.

Once the president has stated a motion, it is open to discussion and debate. Any board member desiring to speak regarding the subject under discussion addresses the president. The member then waits for recognition by the president before speaking. After the board has fully debated the matter and the public has had an opportunity to comment, the president will call for a vote. A yes vote is in support of the proposed action. As an alternative to fully debating the matter, any board member may make a motion to close debate and bring the matter to an immediate vote. The motion must be seconded and then approved by a majority vote of the board for it to take effect.

Normally, the board can only consider one motion at a time. It must dispose of the motion before any other business is considered. As an exception, a secondary motion that concerns the main motion, such as moving to close debate and vote, may be considered before voting on the main motion.

Types of Motions

Six specific motions help to guide meeting activity:

1. *Motion to Amend.* To amend a main motion before it is voted on, a member motions to amend it. This motion must be seconded. Alternatively, the main motion can be amended with the consent of the members who have moved to close debate and have seconded.

2. *Motion to Table.* To table a main motion (to suspend it from consideration until some future *unspecified* time), a member motions to table it. This motion to table must be seconded and approved by a majority vote of the board. Once a motion is tabled, consideration of and voting on the motion are indefinitely suspended.

3. *Motion to Postpone.* To postpone deliberation on a main motion until some *specified* time in the future, a member motions to postpone it. This motion must be seconded and approved by a majority vote of the board. After a main motion has been postponed, deliberation will continue at the specified time.

4. *Motion to Refer to Committee.* To refer a main motion to a board committee for further study, a member motions to refer it to committee. This motion must be seconded and approved by a majority vote of the board.

5. *Motion to Close Debate and Vote Immediately.* To end the debate about a main motion, a member motions to close debate and vote immediately. This motion must

be seconded and approved by a majority vote of the board.

6. *Motion to Adjourn.* To adjourn a meeting, a member motions to adjourn. This motion must be seconded and approved by a majority vote of board members present.

Changes to Procedure

The procedural rules outlined above can be amended or suspended during the course of a meeting if a board member or members feel(s) it would be more productive to do so. Before the rules of order can be suspended or amended, however, certain procedures need to be observed:

1. At any meeting, a board member can propose that the board temporarily suspend and/or amend these rules in whole or in part. For this action to take effect, this proposal must be approved ("seconded") for discussion by another member and then approved by a majority vote of the board.

2. The president uses his/her discretion when applying the rules. Formal meetings with extensive public participation and meetings with heated debates require a more strict application of the rules than informal, more sedate meetings.

3. If a board member believes that these rules are inadequate or that someone has violated these rules, the member raises a point of order to the president. The president then rules on the point of order. If s/he agrees with the observation, s/he corrects the violation. If s/he disagrees, s/he explains the decision. The member who made the motion can appeal an unsatisfactory ruling to the board. A majority vote by the board then determines the point of order.

Recesses

The president may declare a short recess during any meeting.

Meeting Minutes

The board secretary keeps minutes of each regular and special meeting. The board secretary may be either a designated board member or other volunteer or an employee a board appoints. A video- and/or audio-tape recording of the meetings of the board of directors may be made with the approval of a majority of the board. The president or meeting chair announces the use of a recording device. To the extent possible the device is placed in a position observable by all attendees.[4]

Typically, the secretary records these items at each meeting:

1. The date, place, and type of meeting
2. The names of the directors present and absent
3. The names of visitors and delegations present who wish to be identified in the written record. It is not legal to require that visitors be identified in the record.

[4] *California Special Districts Association Sample Policy Handbook, Policy 5060*

4. The call to order (the time at which the meeting formally begins)
5. The names of tardy directors
6. The names of directors departing before adjournment or absent during action taken
7. The adjournment (the time at which the meeting formally closed)
8. A special meeting notification
9. Items being considered at special meetings

When the board takes action, the secretary typically records:

1. The subject of deliberation
2. The roll-call record of votes on motions, resolutions, and ordinances (some districts only record the names of directors making and seconding motions)
3. Board resolutions and ordinances
4. Contracts into which the board enters
5. The employment, resignation, and termination of employees
6. Bid procedures
7. Warrants approved for payment
8. The adoption of an annual budget
9. The presentation of financial reports
10. The presentation of important correspondence
11. The presentation of the district manager's and other staff reports
12. The approval of policies and regulations

The board retains all minutes and recordings of meetings on file. The board distributes one copy of the minutes to each director prior to the next scheduled regular board meeting. Minutes of open meetings become public records and are open to inspection during business hours (§9313). However, minutes taken during closed meetings are not public records (Government Code §54957.2).

PART TWO: EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Introduction

To make sure your meeting is not only legal but accomplishes what you want it to do, there are other issues to consider, and they can be grouped into what should happen before, during, and after the meeting. Typically, monthly board meetings have standardized agendas and the purposes of these meetings are for the board to discuss and make decisions on policies and other actions. Part Two outlines suggestions for other types of meetings, such as committee, strategic planning, or program development

meetings. These meetings often include a wider spectrum of participants and seek equal participation from all attending. These are ideas that may turn your simply legal meeting into something more: an *effective* meeting. For a handy meeting planning tool, see figure 2-1. The following paragraphs detail some issues you might wish to consider as you plan your meeting.

Purposes of Meetings

The design of your meeting will depend on the purpose of your meeting. A meeting to receive public input on a plan or report will likely have a different design than a training workshop. Consider your purpose when designing a meeting (see Appendix I for sample meeting agendas). The following list identifies some of the more common types of meetings:

- Monthly Board Meeting
- Strategic Planning Meeting
- Public Meeting to Get Input on Plan, Report, etc.
- Public Informational Meeting
- Training Workshop

Audience Considerations

Depending on the purpose of your meeting, your audience or pool of participants will vary. Some types of meetings will have an identified roster of participants to whom you can send meeting minutes or other pieces of information ahead of time. Examples of this type of meeting are technical trainings or strategic planning sessions. In other meetings, particularly those for which special emphasis is placed on public participation, you cannot predict who will attend and must prepare for an unspecified number of attendees (extra copies of the agenda and other handouts, extra refreshments, etc.).

Also, anticipating the "mood" of an audience can be vital to the outcome of a meeting. If there is potential for hostile or negative reactions to information or ideas, you must be ready to channel negative emotions or behavior into a productive working climate. Handling extreme instances of hostility is a skill that can only be acquired with practice, and this is not the place to detail strategies for coping with these situations.[5] The important thing is to be ready for this and have a plan in cases where this is likely to happen.

[5] NACD Capacity Building Center has several publications you can send for to help you with facilitation skills, such as, conflict management. Refer to Appendix W, Contact Information, for the address and phone number of the NACD Capacity Building Center.

Figure 2-2. Effective Meeting Checklist

BEFORE THE MEETING

- ❑ What is the *purpose* of the meeting?
- ❑ Who will participate? (Who is the *audience*?)
- ❑ Who should *facilitate* the meeting?
- ❑ What is the *goal* of the meeting?
- ❑ *Where* should the meeting be?
- ❑ Does the meeting need any *special equipment* (overhead projectors, tables, etc)?
- ❑ What kinds of *activities* should the meeting include?
- ❑ What *outcomes* do I want for the meeting?
- ❑ What should I include on the *agenda*?
- ❑ Agenda *sent* to all who will participate?
- ❑ Input solicited from agenda recipients?
- ❑ Have I planned the sequence of ideas/activities thoroughly and do they lead naturally to my desired outcomes?

DURING THE MEETING

- ❑ Have I started the meeting on time?
- ❑ Have the attendees introduced themselves?
- ❑ Have I initiated a short warm-up activity to “break the ice”
- ❑ Have I explained housekeeping: breaks, lunch, restrooms, refreshments, etc.?
- ❑ Have all participants reviewed and accepted the agenda?
- ❑ Have I involved all participants?
- ❑ Have I stuck to the agenda?
- ❑ Have I accurately captured questions and comments?
- ❑ Have we firmed up decisions, identified actions and people to accomplish them?
- ❑ Have we set a next meeting date if needed?
- ❑ Have I reflected on meeting processes and outcomes: did the meeting achieve desired outcomes? Did participants feel positively engaged in the meeting?

AFTER THE MEETING

- ❑ Have I prepared minutes and sent them to participants?
- ❑ Have I followed up with people identified for assignments: Are they making progress? Will they meet deadlines? Do they need assistance? What can I do to help people follow through ?

Another thing to consider about your audience is the present state of their knowledge. Do they have the knowledge necessary to understand the issues and ideas before they attend the meeting, or do you need to provide them with background information so that they can understand the discussion or activities to follow? Even if participants have the prior knowledge, it is a good idea to build a bridge to it at the beginning of the meeting. One way to accomplish this is to refresh participants' memories and check for audience understanding by soliciting questions or asking for perspectives on the issues.

Participants also have physical and psychological needs. People need to know where basic services can be found, such as restrooms, water, coffee, food. They also need to know when breaks and lunch are scheduled so they can pace their attention and level of input. People are used to a certain level of control over their own behavior, and meetings frequently require them to give up this control, at least in part. People are thus more comfortable with giving up some control if they know when certain events are going to happen.

People also need to feel comfortable with the social situation in which they find themselves at a meeting. Gatherings of people can be tense situations for some, and they need to be put at ease if they are to participate fully. The facilitator, through his or her manner, speech, and body language, can make participants more comfortable when participating.

Establishing an atmosphere where all participants are willing to take risks and participate is something to consider carefully. One technique for doing this is to hold a brief warm-up activity to introduce participants to each other and create a feeling of group cohesion: "We are all in this together to share and cooperate, not to compete." (For more information on breaking the ice at meetings, see Step 7, How to Inform and Educate the Public, "Direct Instruction").

Meeting Facilitation

Facilitating a meeting is almost an art: a good facilitator leads the discussion and guides outcomes, yet presents the feeling that s/he is merely acting as an assistant to the group. The focus should be on the group and what the group decides, yet in practice group interactions sometimes can be chaotic. The facilitator acts as the gatekeeper: keeping the group on task, staying with the topics and timeframes of the agenda, yet guiding the group toward decisions and planned actions to carry out the goals and purposes of the group.

A good rule for facilitators to follow is to set up a discussion or activity and get out of the way to let participants interact, stepping in as needed when s/he perceives the discussion getting off track.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency for facilitators to dominate proceedings: some meetings turn out to be nothing more than one speaker presenting information verbally to a passive audience for hours at a time. This approach may ensure that control is maintained and there is no risk of the proceedings getting off the topic, but the role it puts attendees in is one that quickly grows tiresome. If much information needs to be given, lecturing *is* one way to do this, but not the *only* way. Lectures are most effective if

you provide lots of visual aids or other media such as video or slides, provide for audience input through question and answer sessions, and provide frequent opportunities for the audience to get up and stretch.

But information merely delivered to an audience through speaking is no guarantee people are understanding or even listening. Strive for maximum audience participation. This takes the burden off of the facilitator to carry the work load, provides the facilitator with feedback about participant understanding, and allows participants time and opportunity to forge their own understanding through speaking or participating in activities (see also "Activities" below).

Setting Goals

Before you schedule a meeting, before you invite participants, or even before you create an agenda or outline possible meeting activities--you should be very clear about what you hope your meeting will accomplish. A clear set of goals is the core around which you will build the meeting. Some examples of meeting goals are as follows:

- As a group we will decide on the best strategy for educating the public about healthy riparian areas.

- By the end of the presentation I should have board approval for my proposal or a clear idea about how I should modify it to gain their approval.

- I hope to recruit at least five volunteers to help with the project.

There are thousands of possible goals to have for a meeting, and a single meeting may have more than one goal. To keep a meeting focused, however, it is best to limit the number of goals you might have for a meeting, and, if possible, to group these goals so that they are related. If you have too many goals and in particular goals that are unrelated to one another, it might be best to hold two or more meetings so that each meeting can stay focused and generate clear outcomes in line with your goals.

Meeting Facilities

In our concern to have the ideas and activities for a meeting planned we may not take the time to consider the type of facility needed. Is the planned meeting place close to most participants? Are space, heat, air, lighting adequate? Are there enough chairs? Are there adequate parking, bathroom facilities, water, food, beverages? Is this meeting place accessible to everyone who might wish to attend? Will everyone be able to find it?

Special Equipment

Many a meeting has instantly run into trouble because of the lack or failure of equipment. Ask yourself whether you will need any special equipment such as:

- *Flip charts*. Do I have enough paper and felt-tip pens?

- *Overhead projectors*. Is the electrical outlet located close enough to the projection screen or surface?

- *Slide projectors.* Are my slide trays ready? Is the prepared slide tray compatible with the projector? Do I have an extra projector bulb ready if the old one burns out suddenly?

- *Video Cassette Player.* Is the video rewound? Do I know how to operate the equipment?

As obvious as these questions may seem, they are often overlooked in our rush to prepare for meetings. Make sure you also pay as much attention to these details as you do to goals and objectives when planning your meeting.

Activities

Unfortunately, most people think of meetings as occasions when either a speaker talks to an audience for a period of time and then field questions at the end, or when a leader presents topics or issues which a group then discusses. Both of these strategies can be useful, but they are not the only choices you have when planning the activities of a meeting. Alternatives to "lecturing" for two types of purposes are presented in the paragraphs that follow.

Activities for Conveying Information

When many people think of ways to convey information in a meeting, they immediately envision a speaker before an audience. The speaker speaks, uses visual aids, perhaps, and answers questions either as s/he goes along or at the end. This "lecture" approach to conveying information has several advantages: it is efficient in terms of how much information can be conveyed, it demands very little from an audience, and it is very predictable in terms of outcome (because the speaker is in control at all times, there is a reasonable guarantee that the meeting will go as planned).

However, these "advantages" have hidden costs. A speaker may be able to deliver a large amount of information in a short time and therefore seem to be more efficient, but in reality, people do not tend to learn well by passively listening. Educational research has shown that people retain very little (around 20%) of what they hear in lectures. So even though a large amount of information as been "delivered" in a lecture, very little has been "received" in all likelihood. This is because people need to *do* something while they learn: talk, take notes, answer questions, solve problems, etc. People are not only more likely to understand something when they immediately get a chance to use it in some way, they are more likely to retain it and feel excited about having learned it. The most important recommendation for imparting information to people is this: *Give concise information and then let participants wrestle with it in some way.*

Suppose you wish participants to understand the complex interactions of various ecosystem elements (water, soil, vegetation, wildlife, insects) in a riparian environment. In a lecture approach you could simply tell your audience this and provide examples, and details and evidence for this. Another approach, perhaps more powerful from a learning standpoint, would be to have audience members meet in small groups and brainstorm all the possible interactions of ecosystem elements in riparian zones (for example, tree roots provide nutrients to trees but also provide bank stability and prevent soil erosion as well as provide habitat for insects and fish).

Such an approach accomplishes several things:

- It brings people together
- It draws people into the materials by getting them actively involved (it also keeps them awake and paying attention)
- It prepares them to understand any further information you might provide that they did not anticipate (the importance of complexity in stream morphology, for instance)
- It provides them with a sense that the information is *their* information, not the speaker's, and therefore they are much more likely to *do* something with it (such as teach others, restore riparian habitat, seek funding for riparian restoration, etc.)

Activities for Discussing Ideas with a Group

In situations where a group has met to discuss certain ideas or issues, the usual method is for the leader or facilitator to announce the topic or ask a question, and then lead a discussion. Although this approach can be effective, other actions might accomplish the same purpose. Suppose you wanted a group to give feedback on an outline you had developed for an informational publication. The traditional approach would be to make copies of the outline and explain it, asking for feedback at the end.

Other approaches might be to ask participants to spend a few minutes drafting an outline of their own to share. You could post these outlines around the room and look for commonalties or conflicts. Or you might pass out your outline to the group but have them meet in pairs to discuss it and report back to the group what they have agreed on.

The point of offering alternatives is to find ways to get the maximum involvement of each participant. When people are actively engaged at meetings they are more likely to provide insights and useful perspectives and ideas, and they are much more likely to commit to further action if they are involved because they develop a sense of ownership in the group and its goals and are, therefore, more likely to work toward common goals. Another advantage of utilizing many activity strategies for meetings is variety: lots of different types of activities during a meeting help to keep the meeting interesting.

Outcomes

Once you have set a goal or goals for a meeting, the next question you might ask is what outcomes will I seek to tell me I've reached my goal? If you set the goal of creating a strategy for educating the public about healthy riparian areas several outcomes might be:

- *Times and places for public workshops*
- *A plan for advertising the workshops such as newspaper ads, mailings, etc.*
- *People identified who will develop various sections of the workshop*

- *An outline for the workshops themselves*

The most important outcome for a meeting is knowing where to go and what to do next. This should never be in doubt at the end of a meeting. If outcomes are not developed and there is no clear idea among participants about what needs to done next, continue the meeting after a short break or schedule another meeting to take place soon. It should be clear to all what the purpose and goals of a meeting are and what steps might be taken next to reach your objectives.

Forming an Agenda

Once you have a clear picture in your mind (or on paper) of what the purpose, goals, activities, and outcomes of your meeting might be, then you can create an agenda to send to participants. By documenting your ideas in an agenda, you are summarizing the thought process in your planning. Planning the agenda and scheduling amounts of time for each activity also gives you another chance to ask yourself whether you are trying to accomplish too much. If so, you might consider breaking your outline into two or more meetings.

A good agenda gives only an outline of the meeting's events. It leaves room for developments to take place during the meeting. An agenda is a plan of actions centered around certain ideas or issues; it is not the result of those actions. Another important consideration is providing meeting participants an opportunity to review, comment on, or modify the agenda—either before the meeting or at the beginning of the meeting itself. Meetings will be much more effective if participants feel it is *their* meeting and have the right to determine its content and form.

An agenda also frequently allots a certain amount of time for each activity or item. Each individual activity should not exceed about an hour, and meetings are most effective when large blocks of time are broken up with smaller blocks in between.

STEP 3
HOW TO PLAN STRATEGICALLY

WHY PLAN STRATEGICALLY?

Strategic Planning Identifies Priorities

There is no tool more useful in helping you find your way around an unfamiliar location than a road map. An organization's strategic plan is like a road map: it allows you to locate where you are, where you want to go, and the best way to get there. The first step is identifying where you are: what are the resource conservation needs in your district? The second step is identifying where you want to go: what are the possible solutions to resource problems in your district? The last step is planning your route to resource solutions in your district, your strategic long-range plan.

Above all, strategic planning helps you set priorities. With limited economic, technical, and human resources it is impossible for a district to address every possible resource conservation need. Priority setting helps a district determine which needs deserve attention first and enables it to focus its limited resources on addressing those needs. District priority setting is accomplished through creating a mission statement, identifying goals that support its mission, and then crafting objectives that help the district reach its goals.

Strategic Planning Rallies Support from Others

Also, having a clear mission, goals, and objectives—a strategic plan—helps you identify shared interests you may have with other groups, agencies, or individuals. If, for example, your Resource Conservation District (RCD) and the local county planning commission both have identified controlling erosion on private roads as a goal, you may be able to work together by sharing personnel, data, equipment and tools. You might also be able to collaborate on grant proposals in order to increase your chances of receiving funding. Funding agencies often favor projects that are collaborative in nature and take advantage of existing infrastructure.

Identifying common goals also helps you to avoid duplicating the efforts of other groups or agencies that, unknown to you, may already be working on plans to solve the same problem you are seeking to address.

Strategic Planning is Part of a District's Mandate Under Division 9

Beyond these practical reasons for planning strategically in your district is the fact that long-range planning is one of the provisions outlined in Division 9 for the administration of a resource conservation district. The authors of Division 9 have specifically stated that long- and short-range plans will be an integral part of district functioning: starting in the Year 2000, districts wishing to take advantage of state grant programs through the California Department of Conservation will only be able to do so if they create long- and short-range plans and publish annual progress reports ("annual reports").

This chapter seeks to provide you with all of the information you will need to craft long- and short-range plans through the strategic planning process, and it can be used as a

reference tool for strategic planning. In addition, it provides you with a means to translate your strategic planning process into finished planning documents, both long range (five year) and short range (annual) plans. Volume II, Step 3 provides you with materials to use in the strategic planning process itself.

Since writing annual reports to summarize progress toward strategic goals is also a provision of Division 9, a separate chapter, How to Write Annual Reports, is presented in Step 9.

WHAT A LONG-RANGE PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE UNDER PROVISIONS OF DIVISION 9

§9413 discusses the scope of a district strategic plan: each RCD will take account of "the full range of soils and related resource problems found to occur within the district." Division 9 further states that a strategic plan will "identify all resource issues within the district for local, state, and federal resource conservation planning." Figure 3-1 summarizes the provisions for strategic planning in Division 9.

Districts should collaborate with other agencies, individuals, groups, tribes, and others during the planning process in order to identify as many resource needs as possible and to discover commonalties and chances for collaboration between districts, agencies, and other groups.

According to Division 9, a long-range plan will be a 5-year plan, the standard length of time covered in public planning documents and include a framework for setting annual priorities (annual plans) as outlined in the long-range plan.

A long-range plan must also include a means for conveying ideas contained in the plan to the public and other public agencies. One means for doing this might be to publish a summary of the plan in a district newsletter distributed to the public and other stakeholders (for more information on information strategies, see Step 7, How to Inform and Educate the Public).

Lastly, Division 9 states that a long-range plan must include a basis for evaluating progress made toward goals and objectives outlined in the plan. This provides the district with a means of determining if and when a particular objective or goal has been met. Division 9 does not state explicitly how this must be accomplished, but a means for evaluation can be built into the strategic planning process, and outcomes reported in the district's annual report. For more information on the relationship of the planning process to the reporting process, see Step 9, How to Write Annual Reports.

Figure 3-1. Provisions for Long-Range Plans in Division 9

LONG-RANGE PLANS SHALL:

- Establish long-range goals
- Be 5-year plans
- Address the soil and related resource problems found to occur within the district
- Identify resource issues within the district for local, state, and federal resource conservation planning
- Involve other agencies in the strategic planning process
- Provide a framework for setting annual priorities
- Create a basis for evaluating annual work plan achievements and allocating state funds to the district
- Provide for disseminating information concerning district programs and goals to local, state, and federal government agencies and the public

STEPS TO CREATING A FINISHED LONG-RANGE PLAN

A long-range plan is a document kept on file in a district, and, for the purposes of receiving state funding through the state Department of Conservation, sent to the state office during every 5-year planning cycle. The process through which a district creates a finished plan involves many steps and is referred to in this *Guidebook* as the "strategic planning" process. This chapter explains in detail how to undertake the strategic planning process in order to create finished long- and short-range plans. A summary of the steps involved in the strategic planning process is as follows:

1. *Identify stakeholders interested in participating in district strategic planning*. From this list of identified stakeholders, form a local work group made up of key individuals involved with resources. It is important to be inclusive in order to get as wide a range of viewpoints as possible. One important member of the local work group is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) district conservationist, who can provide input on federal programs available for locally led conservation.

2. *Set a strategic planning meeting date(s).* Strategic planning sessions such as the one outlined in Volume II, Step 3 take approximately 8 hours to complete. Plan your strategic planning session to occupy one full day or, if necessary, several partial days.

3. *Invite representatives of identified stakeholders (work group) to the strategic planning meeting(s).*

4. *Send potential participants a brief letter confirming the meeting time, and outline the goals of the strategic planning session in the letter*. You might also send an agenda for the meeting to clarify the goals and activities of the strategic planning session.

5. *Since conservation districts are public agencies, meetings must be open to the public and meeting dates published in advance.* See Step 2, How to Hold Legal and Effective Meetings for details on the Brown Act. Post an agenda for the strategic planning session at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting.

6. *Hold the strategic planning meeting on the date(s), time, and place posted.*

7. *Write minutes of the strategic planning meeting to summarize the major decisions reached by the planning group.* Send copies of the minutes to all participants for review.

8. *Revise the minutes according to corrections and suggestions provided by participants, as applicable.*

9. *Draft the long-range (5-year) plan in accordance with the outcomes of the strategic planning session as recorded in the minutes*.

10. *Send the drafted long-range plan to strategic planning session participants for review.*

11. *Revise the long-range plan in accordance with input from participants*. Resolve any potential conflicts between participants. If necessary, schedule a meeting with strategic planning partners to discuss the draft. Once the draft is finalized it must be approved by board vote.

12. *Summarize the major points of the plan and print this publicly (in a press release, newsletter article or other form).* You may also wish to make copies of the plan available for public review or hold a public meeting to receive input, or both.

13. *Create an annual work plan (annual plan) for the first year of work based on the long-range plan's provisions for annual planning.* Send copies of the drafted work plan to interested reviewers (members of the RCD board of directors, strategic planning participants, other members of the public).

14. *Revise the annual plan in accordance with reviewer suggestions or comments.*

15. *Publish a summary of the annual plan using the same means to publish outcomes of the long-range plan, or publish summaries of both simultaneously.*

The above strategic planning process may seem long and complex, yet, the rewards of planning strategically and obtaining approval and "buy in" from the resource conservation community and the general public are yielded over the long term.

Strategic planning is an investment. It lays the foundation for all that you will do to conserve resources over the long term. It also ensures that the public is fully informed and that all potential stakeholders are involved in the process from the beginning.

Not all of the recommended steps outlined above are covered under the provisions of Division 9, but, taken as a whole, the steps above outline a logical process for fulfilling the spirit of Division 9 regarding long-range and annual planning for resource conservation districts.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION: AN OVERVIEW

It is important that you consider carefully whom you will invite to provide input into the long-range plan. Division 9 asks districts to represent as broadly as possible the groups and individuals involved in resource conservation within a district. Typical participants in a district strategic planning session include district board and staff members, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) personnel (both Natural Resources Conservation Service and Resource Conservation and Development Council employees), county supervisors, and members of the county planning commission.

Members of a strategic planning team might also include representatives from other federal, state, and local government agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management; US Environmental Protection Agency; California Departments of Fish and Game, Forestry and Fire Protection, and Water Resources; or any others with a stake in resource conservation issues in your district, such as Indian tribes.

A strategic planning session might also solicit input from local non-profit groups such as a watershed planning group, Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) group, or individuals strongly involved in resource issues in your area. For more information on identifying key stakeholders in your district, see Step 4, How to Strengthen Community Involvement.

Not only does casting such a wide net provide you with information and perspectives you might not otherwise gain, it promotes “buy in” from a diverse array of groups and agencies who may then see the efforts of the district as supporting their own priorities and objectives.

Once you have assembled your strategic planning team you are ready to begin the strategic planning process. What follows is an overview of a typical strategic planning session. Including this overview is not meant to imply that this is the only way to hold a strategic planning session, but this overview is collected from a number of strategic planning approaches and tailored to suit the needs of resource conservation districts. For a more detailed look at a strategic planning session, see Volume II, Step 3).

Introductions and Expectations

The opening minutes of the strategic planning session are a good time to familiarize participants with your expectations for the session by providing an agenda or outline of the session and to give them an opportunity to get to know one another. You might also invite a brief discussion on their expectations for the session.

District Powers, Authorities, Roles, and Responsibilities

All members of the strategic planning team may not be familiar with the nature of resource conservation districts. Even if all participants *are* familiar with the roles and responsibilities of districts, it is a good idea to refresh their memories. It is not necessary to go into great detail about the provisions for RCDs in Division 9 in this section, but a brief overview of district functions will set the stage for the events to follow in the strategic planning session.

Mission Statement Development

A mission statement is the umbrella under which all organizational activities take place. It defines the work of an organization, in this case a resource conservation district, at its broadest level. Every activity your district engages in should fit comfortably within the bounds of a district's mission as defined in its mission statement. This portion of the workshop gets the participants started on writing a mission statement for the district.

Identification of Resource Issues and District Needs

As stated above, Division 9 states that identification of all potential natural resource problems or issues is central to the strategic planning process. It is also important to identify potential needs your district might have in order to perform identified resource conservation work over the next five years.

Establishing Goals and Objectives

After the group has identified natural resource concerns in the district, as well as district capacity building goals for the planning period, the lists generated from the previous activities will be used to set goals for the district over the next five years. The next activity draws on the group's findings on both resource issues and district needs.

Multi-Year Timeline: Identifying Actions, Personnel, and Resources Needed

Once the group has established goals and major objectives for each goal, district activities over the next five years can be outlined. Timelines for each goal will be created and appropriate partners and personnel identified who will implement each action in the timeline.

Mission Statement Development Review

Mission statements are deceptively simple. What makes writing them so difficult is that they must be broad enough to encapsulate all the district's activities and represent a number of different viewpoints of constituents. For this reason mission statement development can be revisited at the close of the strategic planning session. The length of time needed for this second look will vary depending on whether the group successfully crafted a mission statement at the beginning of the session or whether they had difficulty doing so. If possible, try to have a draft mission statement agreed on by all by the close of the workshop.

Closure

You can wrap up the strategic planning session very quickly by thanking attendees for their hard work that day and repeat the next steps for developing the long-range plan. As facilitator you may or may not be developing the final plan. Inform participants that minutes for the meeting will be drafted, and their input on these minutes will be sought to help capture all of the important points of the meeting. The flip charts and other recording materials (such as copies of action plan worksheets) can be used to develop the minutes of the meeting. You might also inform participants that you will be seeking their assistance and advise on the final long-range and annual plans you will develop based on the minutes of the meeting.

FROM STRATEGIC PLANNING TO LONG-RANGE PLAN

The strategic planning process provides your district with the raw material necessary to create a finished long-range plan. The most valuable aids to writing the long-range plan are the minutes from the strategic planning meeting and the goals and objectives worksheets created by the strategic planning work group.

As stated earlier, Division 9 presents certain expectations for what a long-range plan might include, (see above, “What a Strategic Plan Should Include Under Provisions of Division 9”), but it is not explicit about the format in which the plan is presented. The suggested outline in Figure 3-2 is based on several examples of strategic plans by various groups and agencies and may serve as an outline for your strategic plan. For a sample long-range plan, see Appendix J.

Figure 3-2. Sample Outline of a Long-Range Plan

Executive Summary
District History
District Mission
Physical Setting and Resource Issues
Summary of Goals for the 2000-2004 Planning Period
Major Objectives for Goals

- Goal 1
  - Objective 1 — Performance Measure
  - Objective 2 — Performance Measure
  - Objective 3 — Performance Measure
- Goal 2
  - Objective 1 — Performance Measure
  - Objective 2 — Performance Measure
  - Objective 3 — Performance Measure
- Goal 3
  - Objective 1 — Performance Measure
  - Objective 2 — Performance Measure
  - Objective 3 — Performance Measure
- *Etc.*

Timeline for Objectives 2000-2004

- Goal 1:
  - Year 2000
    - Objectives
  - Year 2001
    - Objectives
  - Year 2002
    - Objectives
  - Year 2003
    - Objectives
  - Year 2004
    - Objectives
- Goal 2, etc.

Appendices

- *Map of Planning Area*
- *Strategic Planning Committee Members*
- *Partnerships*
- *Staff Organizational Chart*
- *Glossary*

Note: Often agencies and groups will present goals and objectives in matrix or table formats and include columns for Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures (evaluation criteria).

Refer to Appendix J for a sample long-range plan.

ANNUAL PLANNING

Relationship of Long-Range and Annual Plans

Once a long-range plan is in place, annual planning is straightforward, since timelines for goals and objectives are already written as part of the long-range plan.

An annual plan (also known as an "annual work plan" or simply, "work plan") reiterates each of the goals and its associated objectives identified during the strategic planning process and identifies those actions scheduled to be undertaken during the forthcoming year of work. To continue our example from the strategic planning outline, suppose that your district had identified controlling erosion in the Friendly Creek watershed as one of its goals for the 5-year planning period covered in its long-range plan. The timeline developed to undertake the various objectives identified as part of this goal might unfold like this:

Goal: In five years sediment delivery to Friendly Creek will decrease by 80 percent as measured by sediment catchment basins in Friendly Creek.

Year 1:

- Obtain funding for watershed restoration/revegetation
- Install sediment catchments in Friendly Creek
- Monitor sediment to establish baseline data and parameters for trend monitoring

Year 2:

- Create a system for mapping the watershed, particularly critical sites, in Geographic Information System (GIS) software
- Identify critical erosion sites, site characteristics and potential causes of erosion in the GIS database to document findings on erosion sites
- Continue trend monitoring of sediment in Friendly Creek

Year 3:

- Create a revegetation plan for the watershed based on GIS mapping, and include a plan for monitoring results of revegetation
- Send revegetation plan out for review by partners, stakeholders
- Revise revegetation plan per reviewer comments
- Begin implementation of revegetation plan
- Begin monitoring results of revegetation
- Continue trend monitoring of sediment in Friendly Creek

Year 4:

- Continue implementation of revegetation plan
- Continue monitoring results of revegetation
- Continue trend monitoring of sediment in Friendly Creek

Year 5:

- Finish implementation of revegetation plan
- Continue monitoring results of revegetation
- Continue trend monitoring of sediment in Friendly Creek

- Summarize results of revegetation and sediment trend monitoring in a report that assesses the degree to which target sediment reduction of 80 percent was reached and make recommendations for any additional efforts to continue sediment reduction efforts.

Setting Annual Objectives

The excerpt from the long-range plan above outlines work for one goal and provides a rough overview of the project over a five-year period. Real world demands (lack of or delayed funding, employee turnover, etc.) often make it necessary to revise plans as you go to account for unforeseen situations. For this reason long-range plans do not go into as much detail as an annual plan might. In writing the annual plan for the first year of work, the brief outline in the long-range plan can be used as a good starting point.

The annual plan would list all of the objectives planned for that year under each goal and add detail that might not be appropriate in a long-range planning document. Thus for the above 5-year plan, one goal in the annual plan for year one might look like this:

Year 2000 Work Plan:

Goal 1: In five years sediment delivery to Friendly Creek will decrease by 80 percent as measured by sediment catchment basins in Friendly Creek.

Objective 1: Obtain funding for watershed restoration, revegetation, and monitoring

Actions:

- Research grant opportunities through the Grant Center, partners, partner web sites, government agencies
- Contact partners (other local agencies, county government, private groups) willing to participate in project
- Write grant(s), with partners if possible, and follow up with funding agencies

Objective 2: Install sediment catchments in Friendly Creek

Actions:

- Publish need for and plan for the project in district Newsletter and/or newspaper(s)
- Solicit volunteers for projects in newsletter/newspaper articles
- Enlist help of volunteers
- Create a design for sediment catchments and plan for data collections
- With volunteers, install catchments

Objective 3: Monitor sediment to establish baseline data and parameters for trend monitoring

Actions:

- Create a design for data collections and information storage and retrieval (database)
- Train volunteers in data collection and data entry
- Begin collecting and inputting data into database
- Create means for summarizing raw data into reports
- Summarize initial data and publish in a baseline study for future trend monitoring.

It is not vital that the outline of objectives initially envisioned in the long-range plan be rigidly adhered to throughout the following years. Modifications due to new insights or information or unforeseen developments should be folded into the overall design of the project and annual plans made to accommodate such changes.

Organization of the Annual Plan

Each of the goals identified in the strategic planning process and documented in the long-range plan will be included in the annual plan with more detailed plans for each objective associated with the goal, as shown in the above example. Annual plans for subsequent years will continue in a similar matter, incorporating any unfinished work from the previous year(s).

Since the purpose of the annual plan is to set objectives for the year's work, the bulk of the annual plan presents detailed objectives for each goal identified in the long-range plan.

Division 9 does not state how the annual plan should be organized, but it does describe some of the things an annual plan should do:

- Be adopted before March 1st of each year
- Identify high-priority actions to be taken during the coming year
- Identify person(s) responsible for actions listed above, as well as how and when they will be performed and completed
- Demonstrate a relationship between annual plans and long-range plans
- Assist local NRCS in adjusting staff and priorities to match district goals
- Inform the public of district goals for the upcoming year
- Involve other agencies in the annual planning process

Figure 3-3 shows a sample outline for an annual plan.

Figure 3-3. Sample Outline of an Annual Plan

I. Executive Summary
II. Mission Statement
III. Summary of Long-Term Goals
IV. Year 2000 Work Plan:

- Goal 1:
  Objective 1:
  Action 1 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles
  Action 2 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles
  Action 3 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles

  Objective 2:
  Action 1 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles
  Action 2 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles
  Action 3 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles

- Goal 2:
  Objective 1:
  Action #1 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles
  Action #2 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles
  Action #3 Person(s) responsible NRCS Roles Other Partner Roles

- Etc.

V. Annual Budget
VI. Tools for Information, Education, and Outreach
VII. Appendices:

- Directors and Associate Directors
- Staff Organizational Chart

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For detailed recommendations for holding strategic planning session(s), see Volume II, Step 3.

For examples of long-range and annual plans, as well as annual reports, see Appendix J.

For more information on writing annual reports, as well as the relationship between the planning and reporting process, see Step 9, How to Write Annual Reports.

STEP 4
HOW TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

INTRODUCTION

"Outreach" refers to an organization's efforts to raise public awareness of the organization, provide information about opportunities and services the organization offers, and, most important for Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), increase public involvement in the organization's activities. RCDs rely on all these facets of outreach to carry out a district's mission. Because so much of what constitutes "outreach" can also be considered education, methods for raising public awareness and providing information to the public are discussed under Step 7, "How to Inform and Educate the Public." The present chapter focuses on increasing public participation or community involvement in resource conservation.

Over the years the focus for many districts has broadened from concern with soil and water conservation on individual landowners' properties to broader geographic perspectives. The current emphasis on watershed-level planning expresses an increased awareness in the interactions of various ecosystem elements (soil, water, wildlife, vegetation, human uses) on this broader scale. Conservationists have found that examining a localized soil erosion problem in a larger context may reveal causes or related problems elsewhere that will need to be examined if the specific erosion issue is to be fully addressed.

In order to gain this larger perspective, districts and other conservationists have begun to involve landowners, land users, residents, and other stakeholders in a watershed in addressing resource issues of mutual concern. A diversity of participation and viewpoints, however, does bring with it challenges a narrower focus might not involve. Nevertheless, understanding various viewpoints and seeking common ground among stakeholders may at times be the only way to effectively address resource conservation concerns over the long term so that all may benefit.

The discussion below takes an in-depth look at one of the most common methods for increasing community involvement in resource conservation planning at the watershed scale: Coordinated Resource Management and Planning (CRMP). Many CRMP groups throughout California have been formed, and a diverse array of similar groups, such as Watershed Councils, operate similarly. Since RCDs frequently provide the impetus for forming CRMP groups--and frequently provide meeting space, office equipment, and other resources to ensure their success--the CRMP process is discussed below in detail to serve as a model for the formation of new CRMPs or other groups that seek to involve their local communities in addressing resource concerns on a watershed scale.

COORDINATED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING

For over a decade, the California CRMP Program has been supporting and assisting locally based cooperative resource management throughout California. There are nearly 100 registered CRMP groups in the state. The vast majority of these groups are watershed oriented, and a large number of these groups are supported in part by their local RCD.

Experience has shown that people with diverse viewpoints who *voluntarily* meet together as a planning team will find common ground as they interact with one another and have a chance to observe resource problems firsthand. Through discussion, landowners, land users and resource managers learn to understand and respect each other's viewpoints. Although each member of the group may have different interests in the land, the collaborative process can help them realize they also have a *common* interest: the continued health and productivity of the land and its resources. The end result is constructive problem solving through cooperative resource planning.

A *CRMP Handbook* is available to help people carry out CRMP projects. It is available free from the CRMP program director's office (see Appendix W, Contact Information, for information on contacting the program director's office)[1]. After reading the *CRMP Handbook*, you still may have many questions about the processes involved in starting and running a CRMP group. The paragraphs that follow will attempt to answer some questions commonly asked by RCD staff about the CRMP program:

- *What is CRMP?*
- *How Does CRMP Work?*
- *What Defines a CRMP?*
- *What is the Relationship Between CRMP Groups and RCDs?*
- *What is an RCD's Role in Setting Up and Supporting CRMP groups?*
- *Where Can an RCD Get Support for Its Role in CRMP?*
- *How Many CRMP Groups are There? How Do I Find Them?*
- *How Do CRMP Groups Obtain Funding?*

What is CRMP?

CRMP is a community-based process used for resource planning, problem solving, and management. The CRMP process emphasizes direct participation by everyone concerned with natural resource management in a given planning area. The concept underlying CRMP is that coordinating resource management strategies will result in improved resource management and minimized conflicts among land users, landowners, governmental agencies, and interest groups.

The term, "CRMP" is often applied to a group of people working together to improve a watershed, which may include improving fish and wildlife habitat, reducing erosion, or working with a variety of other natural resources. CRMP, however, does not refer to the group itself, rather it is the *process* that members of the group use to increase understanding, communication, and involvement to reach agreement about the resource improvements that are wanted or needed. The purpose of using CRMP is to solve

[1] More complete information on the CRMP process and Program is available through the *CRMP Handbook*, CRMP web site, or by asking the CRMP program director. You may call the program director during office hours with any questions relating to the program, the process, agency contacts, specific resource issues in your area, referrals to experts in resource management, facilitation, or legal issues. For assistance in contacting your local RCD office, look for the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts on the web at http://ceres.ca.gov/carcd/index.htm, or contact the CRMP program director.

problems and achieve objectives through consensus. CRMP is the process that leads to a product: better resource management. The following four statements define the CRMP process at its broadest level.

- *CRMP is a resource planning, problem solving and management process that encourages direct participation of everyone concerned with natural resource management in a given area.*

- *CRMP results in improved resource management and minimizes conflict among land users, landowners, government agencies and interest groups.*

- *The end result of CRMP is constructive problem solving through cooperative resource planning with the ultimate goal being to protect, improve, and/or maintain natural resources.*

- *CRMP operates on a local level, but may stimulate policies at higher levels.*

CRMP is a model process, which can be used and adapted by a wide range of groups to best address their particular resource interests. A group may meet to discuss broad resource issues, such as the health of a watershed, or a more narrow resource issue. The result is that each CRMP is unique. Whether the process is initiated by an individual, group, or agency, local participation and control are what distinguishes CRMP from other planning efforts and are the keys to success.

The CRMP process can be effective in practically any resource management situation--for example, to bridge gaps among government agencies, private landowners and other resource users. It is particularly appropriate for areas where local resource management issues involve lands under more than one ownership or jurisdiction and where there are existing or potential conflicts among land and resource uses. The process also helps sustain a healthy natural resource situation.

The ultimate goal of CRMP is to protect, improve and maintain natural resources. The objective of each CRMP effort is to develop and carry forward a unified program of action for resource use and management that minimizes conflict. Actions should be consistent with land and water capabilities and supported by people whose interests are affected.

How Does CRMP Work?

The CRMP process is used to enhance resource management. The process is very flexible. The goals of the participants determine how simple or complex the process will be. Figure 4-1 presents a step-by-step outline of the CRMP process and represents a starting point and guide for groups. Many variations are successful, although most CRMP efforts include a majority of the steps.

Figure 4-1. Twelve Steps to a Successful CRMP

1. *Identify the opportunity and get organized.*
2. *Define the planning area.*
3. *Define the planning group.*
4. *Gather information on the planning area.*
5. *Call the first meeting of the planning group.*
6. *Identify the major resource issues and planning objectives.*
7. *Identify the actions proposed to accomplish each objective.*
8. *Develop and review a draft CRMP plan.*
9. *Seek funds to implement the CRMP plan.*
10. *Sign the final CRMP plan.*
11. *Implement the plan.*
12. *Monitor implemented activities for success.*

What Defines a CRMP?

Is a group a CRMP if it includes many, but not all stakeholders? Is it a CRMP if it includes just a few, primary stakeholders, with just two or three interests represented? Do cooperators have to follow every step in the *CRMP Handbook* to be considered a CRMP?

There is no set of rules that define a CRMP project or group. CRMP is a model process, which can be used and adapted by a wide range of groups to best address their particular resource interests. A group may meet to discuss broad resource issues, such as the health of a watershed, or a more narrow single resource issue. The result is that each CRMP group is unique.

Obviously, there are many degrees to which stakeholder involvement and cooperation can be carried. Any form of cooperation and increased communication between interested parties is likely to produce benefits for the management of the resource. The CRMP model strives to induce *all* willing stakeholders to participate in the planning, implementation, and monitoring phases of projects, in order to build solutions which best meet the needs of all resource users, and to avoid late-arising conflicts.

Groups that operate using the basic principles of cooperative management outlined in the *CRMP Handbook*, that bring diverse stakeholders together to develop consensus-based management decisions, are CRMP groups.

What is the Relationship Between CRMP Groups and RCDs?

RCDs provide a means for local people to access federal and state service programs and a forum for communication between themselves and government. As such, RCDs are in an excellent position to bridge the gap between agency staff/programs and landowners. The CRMP process is also aimed at bringing these stakeholders together over specific resource issues.

As signatories to the CRMP Memorandum of Understanding, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) is committed to supporting the CRMP process. Because of the closely related goals of the CRMP Program and CARCD, especially the importance placed on local citizens' participation in resource planning, the two naturally fit together. Likewise the local CRMP group and RCD often share similar resource and public participation goals.

CARCD provides in-kind contributions of office space and financial accounting services for the CRMP Program. CARCD's executive director serves as a member of the CRMP Program's Technical Advisory Council, which determines program direction and provides assistance to local CRMP groups. Similarly, CARCD helps to connect local CRMP groups with local representatives for assistance, particularly with RCD directors and staff.

What is an RCD's Role in Setting Up and Supporting CRMP Groups?

Many CRMP groups receive substantial technical and financial assistance from their local RCD. RCDs can be sources of information on other CRMP projects, local agency representatives, government programs and officials, grant programs, and much more. RCDs commonly assist CRMPs with the following important tasks:

Initial Coordination

RCDs may be able to offer CRMP groups help with big questions or fine details of contacting stakeholders, publishing meeting notices, obtaining meeting space, and other sometimes difficult hurdles for new groups.

Watershed Coordinators

Some RCDs obtain funding to hire an employee with the specific mission of coordinating (or initiating) watershed management efforts in the district. These watershed coordinators can be valuable resources to a CRMP group, especially a newly formed one, which lacks the funding to independently hire staff.

In-Kind Services

Some offices may be able to supply use of workspace, office equipment (for example, copy machines), or meeting space.

Custodian of Grant Funds

Many grants can only be distributed to organizations with non-profit tax status. Obtaining this tax designation can be difficult or impossible for new groups. Many CRMPs instead turn to another tax-exempt organization to act as their "fiscal agent," frequently, the local RCD. Because they are government agencies, RCDs can file under federal tax-exempt status. An RCD can serve as the fiscal agent to receive grant disbursements and administer funds for the non-designated group. This is a formal arrangement with requirements for financial accountability on both sides. It is a frequently used means for small groups to receive and manage grant funding. In some cases, grants specifically require that grantees have Federal tax-exempt status as not-for-profit entities--a "501 (C) (3)" tax status. Since RCDs are government entities, they cannot qualify for 501 (C) (3) status.[2] In cases where CRMP groups need assistance managing grants from an entity with 501 (C) (3) status, the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) can act as grant manager (see Appendix W, Contact Information, for the latest address and phone number for CARCD).

Sponsor of Grants

When applying for grants, it is especially helpful for new groups to have the support or sponsorship of established organizations. RCDs commonly "sign on" to grant applications for groups if they have been involved in the planning process and support the goals and methods proposed.

Technical Advice

Staff with a wide variety of expertise can be found both in the RCD office and through RCD contacts.

Access to Contacts

The local focus of the CRMP process makes community support essential. RCD offices generally maintain mailing lists for the local area and may have lists of landowners or other stakeholder groups. These can be extremely helpful for CRMPs conducting outreach and stakeholder involvement efforts.

Outreach, Publicity, Information, and Education

The RCD offices have experience in many other programs and processes which may be helpful to a CRMP group, including outreach, publicity, information dissemination, and education.

Where Can an RCD Get Support for Its Role in CRMP?

CRMP Program Director

One available resource for RCD support for CRMP is the CRMP program director. The Program Director is available to answer questions, provide referrals to experts in

[2] As government entities, special districts can be exempt from taxation normally applied to for-profit businesses and can request to have IRS 170 (c) tax-exempt status.

resource management and meeting facilitation, and set-up local workshop and meeting events. CRMP workshops offer participants the opportunity to:

- *Meet and network with each other*
- *Learn about resource management issues*
- *Gain consensus building and meeting facilitation skills*
- *Learn about new and continuing assistance and grant programs*
- *Discuss common problems and various solutions*
- *Observe field work and restoration projects*
- *Enjoy social events at the workshops*

Workshops are held in different locations throughout the state in response to requests received (and sometimes in conjunction with other training events). For information on upcoming workshops, or to request one in your area, contact the program director.[3]

Government Agencies

The California CRMP Program is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and supporting community efforts in Coordinated Resource Management and Planning. Six California state agencies and seven federal agencies are officially signed on to the CRMP Memorandum of Understanding as sponsors of the program. See Figure 4-2 for a list of these agencies.

CRMP signatory agencies are a good source of information on the CRMP process, other CRMPs in the area, and technical issues in resource management. Each of the signatory agencies has committed time and resources to the development of the CRMP program and has a vested interest in supporting and participating in the cooperative resource management and planning process. The professionals at the state and federal resource management agencies have access to and knowledge of large amounts of publicly available information and resource data, and they are paid to help.

[3] The CRMP Technical Advisory Council also maintains an informational web site at http://ceres.ca.gov/cacrmp, publishes a quarterly newsletter: *CRMP Connection,* and provides the *CRMP Handbook: background and procedures for CRMP groups from getting organized to monitoring results*. All of which is available free of charge from the program director's office. For current program director contact information, see Appendix W, Contact Information.

Figure 4-2. Government Participants in CRMP	
State Agencies	**Federal Agencies**
California Department of Conservation	USDI Bureau of Land Management
California Department of Fish and Game	USDI Bureau of Reclamation
California Department of Food and Agriculture	US Environmental Protection Agency
California State Lands Commission	USDA Farm Services Agency
California Department of Water Resources	US Fish and Wildlife Service
California Department of Forestry & Fire Protection	USDA Forest Service
	USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

As participants in the CRMP process, resource managers meet on equal terms with other participants. They often bring with them extensive experience with local resource issues and related policies. This experience and knowledge of previous research and data collection help the CRMP process get moving and can help to avoid unnecessary delays or duplication of effort. As representatives of the member agencies, resource managers have some ability to help the CRMP "negotiate" cost sharing and other types of agreements with agency decision makers. They can also carry back recommendations from local landowners to those involved in setting public land policies.

Contacts at individual agencies can be made directly. For assistance making contacts or locating individuals with experience in particular resource issues or geographic regions, contact the CRMP program director.

Connecting with Other CRMPs

The *CRMP Handbook* contains step-by-step instructions for CRMP groups, from getting organized to monitoring results. Though this is a good place for all new groups to start, questions may still remain about *how* to accomplish a specific goal, step, or outreach activity. The best resource available to newly forming groups is the body of knowledge accumulated by those groups that have successfully gone through the same or similar processes.

Connecting with a representative from another CRMP group in your area (or one with similar resource goals) may provide some of the answers. Your local RCD or University of California Cooperative Extension office can be another excellent resource, as many offices have had experience with one or several CRMP groups in the past. For information on contacts in your area, go to the CRMP Inventory in the University of

California Davis Information Center for the Environment's Natural Resource Project Inventory (NRPI)[4], or contact your local RCD office.

How Many CRMP Groups Are There? How Do I Find Them?

The number of CRMP groups and projects is unknown. The counting of groups is dependent on several factors, and especially hinges on the definition of a CRMP group. It is estimated that there are 300 groups across the state using a CRMP-like process. The CRMP Technical Advisory Committee maintains a list of all projects and groups that have sent their contact information sheets to be included on the CRMP mailing list and receive information about upcoming events, workshops, and funding opportunities. That list includes nearly 100 projects and groups dealing with a wide variety of resource issues.[5]

How Do CRMP Groups Obtain Funding?

The majority of time and effort that goes into starting and running CRMP groups and implementing their projects is contributed by unpaid, dedicated volunteers. Much of the field work and restoration efforts involve at least some volunteer labor and in-kind contributions of materials and expertise. But large restoration and planning efforts, and even large public outreach efforts, cost money. The *CRMP Handbook* gives some brief suggestions as to how a CRMP organization can raise financial support.

Most groups will eventually seek grant awards for support of their operations and project implementation. There are numerous sources of grant monies available for these kinds of projects, so many in fact, that it can be difficult and confusing to try to locate the appropriate funding organizations and grant programs. The application process can be time consuming and tedious, and the competition tough. However, there are sources of assistance available, and strategies that can help show your project in the best light.

The Non-Profit Resource Center, with offices in Sacramento and Redding, is an assistance program with the resources to help you find and successfully apply for grants. The center has information on thousands of grants and can help you research those your group qualifies for, what the applications require, and when the deadlines are. To get in touch with the Non-Profit Resource Center, refer to Appendix W, Contact Information.

State and federal resource agencies also have many programs to help fund restoration or preservation activities. Check with local offices, and make sure to ask any agency representatives who are stakeholders in your group. There may also be opportunities for cost sharing, where agencies agree to pay for some portions of the project if other funding can be found (this most commonly happens if some of the restoration occurs on public lands). Including cost-sharing opportunities, volunteer work, and in-kind contributions in your grant applications can make your project more attractive to funding

[4] http://endeavor.des.ucdavis.edu/nrpi

[5] For a complete look at all the registered CRMP projects, visit the University of California Davis Information Center for the Environment's Natural Resource Project Inventory (NRPI) at: http://endeavor.des.ucdavis.edu/nrpi and click on "Query," then "Programs." Next, select, "CRMP." You will get a list of all the projects with contact information and descriptions of their location, goals, cooperators, and achievements.

organizations or agencies. This allows you to present your project as a good “restoration investment.”

The CRMP Technical Advisory Council may also be able to help you find the funding you need. Information on upcoming “requests for proposals” (RFPs) that are particularly applicable to CRMP groups and projects is posted quarterly in the CRMP newsletter, *CRMP Connection*. Quarterly articles about CRMP group successes often include good examples of fund raising, volunteer organization, and solicitation of in-kind contributions. Current and back issues of the *CRMP Connection* are posted on the CRMP web site. For a current Web site address or if you have any other questions, contact the CRMP program director, see Appendix W, Contact Information.

STEP 5
HOW TO USE PROGRAMS TO IMPLEMENT PLANS

INTRODUCTION

Step 3, How to Plan Strategically, provided detailed information on crafting a district long-range plan. Included in this process were identifying key stakeholders, forming a local work group for resource conservation planning, and identifying priority resources needs in the district. Division 9 states that locally led conservation planning should be resource driven, not program driven, but once you have identified resource conservation needs in your district and formed plans for addressing them, the next step is identifying sources of assistance for carrying out your long-range plans.

Assistance varies from direct assistance, such as the technical assistance your local district conservationist or soil conservationist can lend, to various types of cooperative agreements, including grant assistance. This chapter provides you with information on how to identify government programs that might help you meet your conservation goals, a list of government programs—including federal and state programs--and a discussion of the various types of agency partnerships your district can enter into with other agencies in order to receive assistance. Step 6, How to Raise Funds and Write and Manage Grants, provides more specific details on how to get funding for district plans.

IDENTIFYING GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Federal and State Grant Programs

It would be nearly impossible and very cumbersome to include a list of all possible government programs that a resource conservation district (RCD) can participate in to carry out locally led conservation. Nevertheless, there are some common programs that are widely used by districts throughout California, and it is important that you and your partners become familiar enough with these programs to determine whether they fit your district's plans. There are both federal and state programs, and, in some cases, programs that are both (the Cal-Fed Bay Delta project is a case in point). Figures 5-1 and 5-2 provide brief summaries of some of the most common federal and state assistance programs.

Further Information on Government Programs

Because there are so many programs--some being phased out, new ones coming in to being, and funding levels change from year to year—it is impossible to provide a complete list of available government programs. One good way to keep up to date is by tapping into World Wide Web sources for program information. For a list of funding agency contacts and World Wide Web sites see Appendix W.

Figure 5-1. Federal Assistance Programs

Agency/Contact Information	Program	Description
USDA **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (530) 792-5646	**EQIP** Environmental Quality Incentives Program	Provides technical, financial, and educational assistance to address significant natural resource needs and objectives
Helen Flach (530) 792-5602	**WHIP** Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program	Provides technical assistance and cost sharing to help establish and improve fish and wildlife habitat.
Helen Flach (530) 792-5602	**WRP** Wetlands Reserve Program	Provides landowners an opportunity to sell easements to the USDA and receive cost share assistance to restore and protect wetlands.
JR Flores (916) 792-5603	**FPP** Farmland Protection Program	Purchases conservation easements on land with prime, unique or other productive soils for the purposes of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land.
Jim Koscis (530) 792-5605	**RC&D** Resource Conservation and Development Program	Assists local people in initiating and carrying out long-range programs of resource conservation and economic development, conducting grant searches, and coordinating multi-county planning.
USDA **Farm Service Agency** (530) 792-5520	**CRP** Conservation Reserve Program	Provides annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource conserving covers on eligible cropland.
USDI **Bureau of Land Management** (916) 979-2858	Land Exchange Program	Provides funds to convert private land into public lands.

Figure 5-2. State Assistance Programs

Agency	Program	Description
California Department of Conservation (916) 324-0850	**RCD** Grants Program	Provides competitive grants to RCDs throughout the state to undertake a wide range of projects, include watershed restoration projects, district capacity building, and support for creation and sustenance of Coordinated Resource Management Planning (CRMP) groups.
(916) 324-0850	**ALSP**[1] Agricultural Land Stewardship Program	Provides incentives to protect productive agricultural land from development pressures. ALSP provides funding for cities, counties, and non-profit land trusts to purchase development rights, known as agricultural conservation easements, from farmland owners. Beginning in January 2000, RCDs will be able to apply for technical assistance and acquisition grants to fund easements through CFCP.
(916) 323-3836	**DOR** Division of Recycling	Offers grants that are awarded to nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies, including school districts, individual schools, special districts, and joint power authorities to implement beverage container recycling projects.
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (707) 576-2935 (559) 243-4108 (909) 320-6120	**FIP** Forestry Incentives Program	Funds restoration of forest ecosystems devastated by natural disasters such as catastrophic wildfires, drought, and insect and disease infestations.
(707) 576-2935 (559) 243-4108 (909) 320-6120	**CFIP** California Forest Improvement Program	Provides grant assistance for local landowners wishing to undertake forest improvement practices on their property; support for local organizations for planning, outreach, and education; and for organizing restoration projects in watersheds.

[1] Beginning January 1, 2000 the ALSP program name will be changed to California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP).

Figure 5-2. State Assistance Programs--Continued		
Agency	**Program**	**Description**
1-800-738-TREE (916) 653-8286	**FSP Forest Stewardship Program**	Provides funds to assist communities with watershed projects involving multiple ownership and agencies.
1-800-738-TREE (916) 653-8286	**SIP** Stewardship Incentive Program	Provides cost share dollars to landowners to develop management plans that meet landowner objectives and protect and enhance resources.
California Department of Fish and Game (916) 654-6505	**Fisheries Restoration Grant Program**	Provides grants to improve or restore salmon and steelhead populations through fishery habitat improvement projects, cooperative fish-rearing programs, and public education.
CalEPA/ State Water Control Board (916) 657-0876 (916) 657-0793	**CWA 319(h)** Clean Water Action Plan Grants-*Projects*	Provides assistance for projects mitigating non-point source pollution.
(916) 657-1031	**CWA 205(J)** Clean Water Action Plan Grants-*Planning*	Provides assistance for water quality and natural resource planning.
(916) 657-1043 (916) 657-0673	**Proposition 204** Safe, Clean, Reliable Water Supply Act	Provides for rehabilitation of watersheds tributary to the San Joaquin/Sacramento Rivers

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS, MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING, COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, GRANTS, AND COST-SHARE PROGRAMS

Receiving assistance from other government agencies requires entering into formal relationships with these entities. The type of relationship your district will forge with funding agencies depends on the type of program you participate in. Generally, you and the government agency enter into a legal agreement called a *contract*. A contract is defined as "an agreement to do or not to do a certain thing. It gives rise to an obligation or legal duty enforceable in an action at law. It sets forth terms, conditions, and the statement of all work to be performed."[2]

[2] State Contracting Manual, 3rd edition. (Sacramento: California Department of General Services) March, 1998.

The paragraphs below summarize the chief features of various district-to-agency agreements. For the sake of completeness (and so you learn what they are) these include agreements that RCDs do not usually enter in to. In the following paragraphs, "agency" will refer to a government agency such as the Bureau of Land Management or the Department of Conservation, and "outside group" will refer to other entities such as an RCD.

Interagency Agreements

Interagency agreements are used when one agency is providing payments, goods, or services to another agency. Interagency agreements can only be entered into by state agencies. Local government or special districts such as RCDs do not sign interagency agreements with government agencies.

Memoranda of Understanding

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) are most commonly used to establish partnerships and document specific responsibilities; signatories agree to work toward mutual goals, perform joint work, or share research results without the exchange of funds between them. For a sample MOU see Appendix K.

Grants

Grants allow an agency to transfer money, property, services or anything of value to an outside group for a project of mutual interest where substantial agency involvement is not anticipated. For a sample grant contract see Appendix N.

Cooperative Agreements

Cooperative agreements allow an agency to transfer money, property, services or anything of value to an outside group for a project of mutual interest where substantial agency involvement *is* anticipated. The difference between a grant and a cooperative agreement is that with a grant there is very little direct involvement on the part of the agency in the project, whereas with a cooperative agreement, there is an expectation the agency will be more directly involved in the work.

Cost-Share Agreements

Cost-share agreements, like cooperative agreements, are made when there is expectation that the agency will have direct involvement in the project, but they differ from cooperative agreements in that cost-shares require matching funds or in-kind services[3] from the outside group, frequently in a one-to-one ratio. For example, if an agency agrees to give your district a $5,000 cost-share to carry out a project, the district

[3] "In-Kind Services" means contributions a grantee makes toward the project that are not cash contributions. For example, when a district pays overhead costs such as rent and telephones out of other income sources, or when it utilizes volunteer help with projects, these are considered "in-kind" contributions and their worth in dollars is calculated and added to the grant as part or all of the RCDs cost-share contribution. Some grants that are not cost-share agreements also ask for evidence of other sources of funding or in-kind services as part of the grant requirement.

would have to contribute the equivalent amount of $5,000 in money, property, labor, materials, equipment, or land or water. Cost-share agreements are typically entered into with federal agencies (and called “Challenge Cost-Sharing”), such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service, The USDI Bureau of Land Management, and the USDA Forest Service. Beginning in the year 2000, however, the state Department of Conservation will also require that grant recipients contribute a 25% cost-match to the grant award.

Procurement Contracts

Procurement contracts are instigated by an agency when it wishes to acquire goods or services for its own direct use. In these cases there is no “mutual benefit” with the contracted party (except for fees paid). Procurement contracts are not normally entered into with RCDs.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PARTICIPATING IN GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Because government agencies support locally led conservation, they frequently enter into contracts with districts to fund needed conservation at the local level. Such assistance, however, does not come to districts without stipulations. It is important that your district become aware of legal and other requirements of funding agencies and be prepared to answer questions such as those shown in figure 5-3.

Figure 5-3. Considerations When Participating in Government Programs

- Does the program allow your district to carry out the plans envisioned in its long-range plan? Or, does the program substantially alter the plans you have created and "pull" the district in another direction?
- Is your district ready to undertake the work contracted? Does it have the expertise?
- Is your board of directors prepared to sign a resolution authorizing the district to enter into the agreement, accept funds, and spend district money to cost-share the project?
- What is the length of time between signing the contract and the arrival of the first payment (this can be up to two years)?
- Is the contract set up for reimbursement or advance payment? Most agencies will provide payments toward grant obligations only after expenses are incurred by the district. Sometimes, a percentage of the entire grant award may be requested "up front" in the form of an advance.
- If payments are reimbursements, how often can you request payment? Contracts vary, but frequently reimbursements are quarterly.
- If payment toward expenses is expected to be substantially delayed, how will you pay for up-front costs for implementing the project? In other words, how will your district "stay afloat" until the money arrives?
- Does you district have sexual harassment, drug-free workplace, and civil rights policies in place? (See Step 8, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations, for more information).
- Does your district have liability insurance in the case of on-the-job accidents? (See Step 8, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations, for more information).
- Is your accounting system able to keep track of grant funds separately from other sources of income? (See Step 8, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations, for more information).

STEP 6
HOW TO RAISE FUNDS AND WRITE AND MANAGE GRANTS

INTRODUCTION

Many special districts in California--such as water, fire, or hospital districts--are organized to bring specific services to residents within their districts. Because they deliver services directly to affected residents they can charge for those services in order to cover the costs of delivering them. Though this approach works well in the case of a water district, resource conservation districts (RCDs), because of the nature of their activities, do not have a consistent and regular product (e.g. water) or a service (e.g., fire protection) to deliver.[1]

Most RCDs have to rely on other means to raise money to provide service, chief amongst these being funds from various private, local, state, and federal funding sources in the form of grants. Even though grants constitute one of the primary sources of district funding, there are in addition a variety of strategies for raising money for your district.

This chapter outlines a number of these strategies in addition to grant writing that districts throughout the state and country have used to raise money for district operations. In addition, the second half of this chapter presents an extensive "How-To" manual on grant writing, and it concludes with instructions for how your district can manage grant awards effectively once they are awarded.

SOURCES FOR CONSERVATION FUNDING AND IN-KIND SUPPORT[2]

Across the state and even across the country, districts have found a multitude of ways to fund conservation activities. The following paragraphs describe some of the strategies your district may use that are allowable under the provisions of Division 9.

Donations and Memberships

One successful way to raise funds for RCD projects is to develop a supporting membership program. In this program, members would make yearly contributions to the district. One group to target is district cooperators. Farmers and other landowners who have been served by the district are most likely to appreciate the value of conservation district work.

A letter to this group announcing your supporting membership program should include information on major accomplishments of the district. It is also helpful to mention future projects that deserve support. Point out that district officials volunteer their valuable time to administer the business of the district. This may encourage support from those that

[1] Information on special districts in this section is from, "What's So Special About Special Districts? A Citizen's Guide to Special Districts in California," published by the California State Legislature, Senate Local Government Committee.

[2] Much of the information for this section was summarized from *More Dollars For Your District, A Publication of the National Association of Conservation Districts.*

the district serves. A membership fee plan can be recommended, but note that any and all support is valued.

Institutions or prominent individuals interested in resource management may also be interested in supporting memberships. These may include local banks, farm supply businesses, community leaders, politicians or educators.

The ways in which you approach individuals or companies for support are important in how you and your district is perceived. Here are a couple of tips:

- Make personal contacts with individuals or companies from whom you wish to receive support by phoning or visiting. Mailings, even if addressed to individuals by name, are much less successful.

- Prepare for potential members a district program overview, which should include details about specific programs which need funding assistance.

Sponsorships

Sponsorships differ from *donations* in that money is given to a district by an organization or individual in exchange for advertising or other benefits. Sponsorships differ from *memberships* in that they are usually event-specific: a sponsoring donation is given on a particular occasion (e.g., financial support for an event), rather than in an ongoing fashion as in a membership, where dues are paid by an individual or organization on a regular basis. A good example of a sponsorship is providing a sponsor with advertising space in a district newsletter in exchange for payment.

Fees for Services

Division 9 provides for districts to charge reasonable fees for services. Providing cooperators and others with services costs the district money, so it is reasonable for the district to charge for these services when they are not covered by a grant or other program. When deciding how much to charge for services several things need to be weighed. Costs for implementing conservation services are a way for districts to remain in operation, but charging more for services than most can afford will make the service unattractive or unattainable for some, so the opportunities to implement conservation work are diminished. Normally, a district would charge fees to simply cover the costs of rendering services, though this is not always easy to calculate. How much, for instance, should a district charge for the rental of a no-till drill for planting? The district had to buy the drill initially, but it is hard to know in advance how much the drill will be used in order to determine how to recover the costs of the initial outlay.

Here are few example of the types of services a district can offer to the public for fees:

- Educational programs
- Grant management
- Water and other kinds of testing
- Pond management service
- Rental of equipment
- Brush and fuels treatments

- Subdivision and other plan reviews in urbanizing areas
- Timber stand improvement
- Workshops or seminars on topics such as landscaping with native plants
- Tree planting
- Implementing a recycling program
- Seeding of road cuts

There are, however, some important issues to be aware of when considering if the district should charge fees for services.

- A district cannot charge for services rendered by Natural Resources Conservation service (NRCS) employees, who often provide technical assistance to landowners in partnership with the RCD.

- Services should be related to the conservation goals of the district.

- Services should not conflict with any federal, state, or local mandates or priorities.

- In contracting to perform services, districts may be liable to legal claims if the services are not performed properly or if damages occur in connection with such services. Legal advice and appropriate insurance are vital parts of a service program.

Sale of Conservation-Related Items

Districts have raised funds for many special projects by selling conservation-related products. Among these are:

- Bird seed
- Bumper stickers
- Calendars with local scenery
- Conservation-related materials such as irrigation equipment
- Firewood
- Fish for stocking farm ponds
- Grass seed
- Hats or T-shirts with conservation themes
- Native plants
- Nesting boxes or other wildlife items
- Tree and shrub seedlings

District tax-exemption status under federal law as 170(c) government agencies does not exempt them from being subject to state and local sales taxes. Districts must pay state and local sales taxes on sale of conservation-related items.

Fundraising Events

If fundraising events are well planned, they can raise money, take the district message out to the community, and involve supporters in a worthwhile and enjoyable project.

They can also build conservation sprit. Here are some fundraising events other districts have held:

- Barbecue with local produce and meat
- Boat trips
- Car washes
- Celebrity dinners (charging a per-plate fee)
- Equipment auctions
- Sale of fireworks during 4th of July season
- Fish fry
- Harvest dinner
- Hunting and fishing clubs (fees for memberships and trips)
- Nature hikes
- Raffle of conservation-related items
- Run (or hike or bike or skate) for conservation with sponsors for each participant
- Wine tasting with wine from local wineries

Appropriate insurance is advisable for these events. Insurance coverage for a special event can normally be obtained at a reasonable cost.

Volunteer Support

Another source of support that is not directly financial but is considered "In-kind" support, is volunteer support.

Volunteers can assist a district in many ways. They can help with the office workload, increase the number and range of contact hours possible for professional staff, and provide the extra assistance necessary to make special projects possible. The key to good volunteer programs is developing clear objectives about the work volunteers will do, gaining commitment from the volunteers, and rewarding them. For more information on volunteers, see Step 8, How to Manage District Daily Operations, Part Five: Volunteers.

State and Local Government Support

State and local government support of locally led conservation takes the form of grants from various state agencies (see Step 5, How to Use Programs to Implement Plans). An ongoing effort to secure regular funding for all districts relies on the continuing effort of districts and district associations, such as the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD), which seeks to educate legislators about the need to strengthen the locally led conservation effort.

This effort is supported by the fact that state and local governments have a lot to gain by supporting RCDs, either through grants or regular appropriations for districts:

- Districts can design and deliver conservation education programs—to children or adults, in schools or out—that are geared specifically to the resource issues in the area.

- Districts can help protect soils from erosion and save government funds otherwise spent on dredging sediment from rivers, cleaning up ditches or purifying polluted water for public consumption.

- Districts can provide flood prevention structures that reduce damage to roads, hydroelectric operations and other public facilities.

- Local conservation efforts contribute to county and state goals for environmental quality and economic growth.

- District personnel salaries contribute to local economies.

- The added value of well-cared-for properties maintains the local tax base and helps build prosperous communities.

- Volunteer time in district work (including time spent by district officials) makes all these district programs available at low cost.

Grants

There are two primary sources for conservation-related grants: governments and private foundations. Both government and foundations look for opportunities to spend money on local conservation projects (including education) that are in keeping with the agency's or foundation's goals.[3] Step 5, How to Use Programs to Implement Plans, presents some of the more common grant programs of which districts can take advantage. Finding appropriate private foundation and government grant programs may require research, but there are many Websites and grant assistance centers (such as the Grant and Resource Center of Northern California, located in Redding) that may shorten the time spent on research. The important thing to remember is that although grant research and grant writing may be time consuming and at times discouraging, hard work usually pays off, for agencies and foundations *want* to lend assistance to local conservation. For a useful list of grant sources, see Appendix O.

Contractual arrangements to perform surveys, studies or other resource-related projects for city and county governments can also generate revenue.

Maximizing the Use of District Funds Through Partnerships

Although not a direct source of funding, strategies such as those described below can help your district get the most from the dollars it does receive.

Working with groups rather than individuals, for example, maximizes the use of staff time. In organizing conservation education work, some districts plan teacher workshops rather than sending staff members into individual classrooms. When dealing with erosion

[3] Care must be taken when entering into contracts with funding entities that grant requirements also meet goals established by the district. As noted earlier, districts should only enter into agreements with funding entities on projects that match district goals. Districts should also be aware that inefficient management of grants can cost the district money. Sound budgeting of grant funds is needed to ensure that losses are not incurred by the district.

problems, an area meeting of landowners can save many staff hours over making individual site visits.

In all cases, “helping people help themselves” can effectively multiply the staff time of districts. Reaching out to influential community leaders can also multiply the impact of district programs and affect large projects or multiple sites through a single contract. Additionally, developing contacts with the local news media can multiply the conservation message.

Districts can maximize the use of funds by cooperating with neighboring districts or other local organizations on projects. Districts have, for example, cooperated with each other in activities ranging from sharing county fair booths to jointly sponsoring a publication.

For more information on the advantage of and methods of building partnerships, see Step 4, How to Strengthen Community Involvement.

EFFECTIVE GRANT WRITING

Preliminary Steps (Strategic Planning)

Before you can begin your grant seeking process you must have a pretty good idea of where your district is heading. Grants are usually given on a project basis, so in order to identify potential projects your district needs to establish resource conservation priorities and create long-term goals. This is the strategic planning process, which is discussed under Step 3. Through strategic planning, your district, along with input from partners such as the NRCS, landowners, and other stakeholders, identifies priorities for the following 5-year period. Once your priorities are in place, you can begin to develop goals for addressing priority resource issues. Goals are then broken down into a set of concrete objectives that could be expressed as individual projects. Once you’ve identified objectives that are expressed in terms of concrete actions you can “package” them as a series of projects for which you can then seek funding. The following sequence roughly outlines the actions you might take to prepare yourself for grant writing:

- Identify Resource Goals
- Set Priorities
- Set Goals
- Create Objectives
- Outline Projects
- Seek Funding For Projects

Once you’ve identified projects and how they fit into a larger scheme of goals and priorities, you are ready to “sell” your project idea to a funding agency or organization, which may agree that your priorities, goals, and objectives are worthwhile and thus worth funding.

Steps to Becoming a Grantee[4]

Undertaking a successful grant process involves more than writing a grant proposal and submitting it to a funding agency. There are many steps to be taken to initiate, write, submit, follow up, and perhaps revise a grant before it is accepted for funding. The "nine steps to getting a grant" are included in the paragraphs that follow and include the following:

1. Identify Your Program or Project
2. Research Funders
3. Talk With Your Co-workers
4. Contact the Funder
5. Write Well
6. Follow Directions
7. Use Copy Editors
8. Follow Up
9. Be Persistent

Identify Your Program or Project

As discussed above under, "Preliminary Steps," funding agencies usually want to see how your proposed project fits into district long-range plans. Sometimes they even request copies of your strategic long-range and annual plans. If you have firm plans in place based on major goals and objectives, it is usually easy to identify which projects you would like to undertake and the order in which you will undertake them. Once you have identified specifically what you would like to accomplish, you can begin the grant research process.

Research Funders

There are many avenues for researching grant opportunities with state, local, and federal agencies, private foundations, banks, or other organizations.

For RCDs, funding sources that commonly support conservation work, both on-the-ground and educational, are state and federal government agencies, including the NRCS, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the California Department of Conservation, and others.[5] One way to find out which grant funds are available from government agencies is to consult their web pages on the internet. Many will post grant fund availability and include requests for proposals (RFPs) that you can download or print from the internet.

You can also read about government agency grant opportunities in quarterly newsletters such as the California Conservation Partnership (CCP) News and the Forest Stewardship News. You can usually receive these free of charge by calling or writing to the agencies and asking them to put you on their mailing list (see Appendix W, Contact Information, for agency contacts to receive newsletters.)

[4] The "Steps to Becoming a Grantee" is quoted in large part from "The Nine Steps to Getting a Grant" and is reprinted with permission from the Grant and Resource Center of Northern California.

[5] See also Step 5, How to Use Programs to Implement Plans.

Other ways to research grants are to use the services of non-profit grant research and educational centers such as the Grant and Resource Center of Northern California, the Non-Profit Resource Center, and other grant foundations. Such organizations often have data bases of funding agencies, reference libraries, and staff to assist you in your search for funding. Such organizations may also offer courses in grant writing and research at low cost.

Also, one of the best ways to hear about grant opportunities is through personal contacts. Your NRCS district conservationist may know of grant opportunities through the NRCS, and you can also talk to representatives from other government agencies by attending CARCD meetings. Every year CARCD hosts an annual meeting and conference, which is attended by districts, agency representatives, and other members of the conservation community. CARCD can also give you dates and locations to other meetings in your area that you might attend in order to become familiar with grant opportunities for your district.

Discuss the Project with Your Co-Workers

Once you have decided on a project idea and you have identified potential funding sources for your project, talk to directors, staff, and related agency personnel in your district about your project idea. Be prepared to change your idea when people give you good advice or insights about what you are trying to achieve. Enlist the help of others who are interested in the project and who may play important roles in the grant writing process at first, and perhaps during project implementation later.

Contact the Funder

Although a funding agency will decide to grant money to you based mostly on the strength of your proposal as written, it helps if they become familiar with you and your organization before they ever see your proposal. Funding agencies and organizations *want* to provide grants—that is part of the reason they are there. They also *want* to help you succeed in your attempts to secure funding for your projects. To the extent that time allows, establish rapport. Ask the funding agency for clarification and guidance on how you may best meet their requirements.

Write Well

This step cannot be overemphasized. No matter how much networking you have done with the funding agent, they will still decide to fund—or not to fund—your proposal based on the strength of its ideas, and ideas are best conveyed through good writing. This means that your proposal must be complete (include all the requested portions in the RFP), well organized (the writing flows logically: main ideas are presented sequentially; details are used to support main ideas), and clear.[6]

One way to ensure that your writing is communicating well is to have several people read your proposal. It is helpful to have both knowledgeable and less knowledgeable

[6] An excellent and concise guide to good writing for almost any purpose is Strunk and White's *On Writing Well,* which conveys the basics of good written communication in a minimum number of pages. You can usually find copies of this small volume in new and used bookstores.

readers review your draft. Knowledgeable readers can provide missing information and correct technical errors; unknowledgeable readers provide a glimpse into how a non-technical audience might view your project, whether it is written plainly and comprehensively to a layperson. Not all granting agents will be familiar with the technical specifics of your proposal. You will need to make such points clear to them by explaining difficult concepts or defining terms. A lay reader will help you to do this.

Follow Directions

Every piece required in your proposal should be spelled out clearly in the RFP. If you have any questions about the RFP, be sure to contact the funding agency for clarification. One of the most important things you can do in writing a proposal is following the specific directions given in the RFP (see Appendix L for a sample RFP). Leaving out requested sections, not responding to specific questions, not following guidelines, submitting late proposals—may result in your proposal being refused. Remember, you are competing against other proposals and many of these will be just as good as yours AND they will have followed the directions in the RFP closely: this will give their proposal an advantage over yours when they are compared side by side.

Use Copy Editors

Copy editing or “proofreading” is another important step in the writing process. It is helpful to have an experienced copy editor read your final draft before you send it out. If you lack an experienced copy editor, you can do this yourself with some special techniques.

One useful technique is getting away from your draft for a few days–letting it “rest.” Sometimes errors “jump out” at you when you take a fresh look at a draft after a few days. Another tool is to read the text several times, each time looking for specific things. One reading might be to determine logical flow of ideas; another reading might be for good grammar at the sentence level; another reading might be for spelling; another for consistency of typeface and headings; and another for mechanics (punctuation, capitalization, etc.). Using such approaches usually allows you to notice mistakes or deficiencies you might not otherwise notice if you try to proofread for everything at once.

Follow Up

Once you have submitted your proposal (by the deadline) it is often a good idea to follow up with a phone call or letter. This communication might do several things:

- Confirm that the funding agency received your proposal by the deadline.
- Allow you to thank them for consideration of your proposal.
- Let them know you are willing to work with them on revisions to the proposal if need be, especially if they generally like your idea but question some of the details.
- Continue the good rapport you established in your initial contact(s) with the funding agency.

Each time a funding agent has a positive impression of you they gain a little more confidence in your ability to follow through on your plans once (if) they decide to fund them. They also learn that they can communicate with you honestly and trust that you are willing to listen to advice or suggestions. All of these may give you an advantage over other grant seekers who remain unknown or "faceless" to the granting agency.

Be Persistent

Grant writing, especially if you are new to it, can be disheartening. No one takes rejection well, particularly if they are new to something and lack confidence. When your proposal is rejected, it is easy to give up and to think that perhaps you were not cut out for grant writing after all.

Not true! Like anything, grant writing takes practice, and you learn along the way. Failure is often the first step toward success because you can learn a great deal by it—but only if you ask questions.

If your proposal is not accepted the first thing you might do is find out why. Granting agencies strive to make their decisions fairly and to base them on reasoning. If your program was not accepted then there is a reason or are reasons why. Ask them. If the funding agency gives you a vague answer such as, "There were so many proposals and though yours was excellent we just couldn't fund them all." Don't settle for this. Probe deeper. In trying to be nice to you they are doing you a great disservice. As hard as it may be to take criticism (and rejection), you are far better off if you ask for it and listen carefully to it because this information will be very useful to you the next time you submit a grant, either to this particular funding agency or to others.

If your grant is not accepted there are thus several things you can do:

- Revise it (to correct weakness stated by funding agent) and re-submit it to the same agency, if possible.
- Revise it and submit it to another agency in accordance with another RFP.
- Continue looking for grant opportunities that might fund your project as conceived.
- Re-examine the project to discover why it cannot be funded as conceived.

In short, *keep trying*. Many people find they must write several grants or more until they are successful, and they are not always successful no matter how many times their projects have been funded in the past.

Elements of a Typical Grant Proposal

Requests for proposals are not all alike. Because of the differences between funding agencies or organizations and even differences in the types of projects each funding agency is looking for from year to year, separate proposal requests often seek different information. Still, there are some commonalities in the type of elements requested in proposals that can be usefully summarized here. Typically, a proposal will include the following:

- *Summary.* This is a short paragraph that gives an overview of the project by summarizing the main ideas in each of the parts of the proposal.

- *Introduction.* This portion introduces the qualifications of your agency to undertake the work you are proposing. Here also is where you can show how the proposed project fits into your district's mission and long-range plans.

- *Problem or Needs Statement.* This continues the discussion started in the Introduction, adding reasons for why this particular project is needed to further the aims of your strategic plan and/or address resource or environmental needs.

- *Objectives.* These are the specific outcomes you expect to achieve through your project. Objectives should be measurable. For example, you state that you want to reduce erosion in the Friendly Creek watershed as an overall goal. To do so, you are requesting funds for revegetating certain critical slopes in the watershed. It may be difficult to measure actual rate of erosion, but you can keep track of how many trees you will plant and how many acres you will treat with a seed-mulch-fertilizer combination. You state that you will treat 60 acres in the watershed with a seed-mulch-fertilizer combination and plant 300 ponderosa pine seedlings and 200 willows.

- *Evaluation.* At the end of the project you evaluate whether you reached project objectives or not. You might, for instance report that because of seedling availability you only planted 280 ponderosa pines and 180 willows, but you treated over 65 acres with a seed-mulch-fertilizer combination. You might add more refined outcomes to this if you can: for instance, you might monitor the percentage of trees that survived over the course of the project (60% of trees survived) or that certain signs indicate erosion is decreasing (cubic yardage of sediment removed from catchment basins was 45% lower than the previous year, even though rainfall for the year was roughly the same). Because of the variables (rainfall, other human activities up- and downstream of the project site, etc.) you can only conjecture that the latter result is directly due to your project. You can, however, state unequivocally the number of trees and acres planted.

- *Future Course of Action.*[7] Even if your project is successful, it was still probably a part of a larger effort or long-term goal. This section of the proposal, if included, might discuss next steps for meeting a specific long-term goal, or ways in which the results of the present project may be continued, improved, or monitored (i.e., tree survival over a ten-year period, erosion rates over time, fish counts in streams impacted by the project, etc.). Most of the time one project leads to another in a continuing search for ways to restore a watershed or improve conditions on the land. These long-term objectives should be embodied in your district's long-range plan.

[7] The source document for this section, "Proposal Components," created by the Grant and Resource Center of Northern California, named this item, "Future Funding." From the standpoint of non-profit foundations, most projects are ongoing and will require continued funding. In these cases foundations want to know if there is a plan in place for making programs pay for themselves once they are up and running. In the case of RCD projects, the situation is usually different and may likely involve monitoring of completed work or plans for similar work elsewhere.

- *Budget.* One of the most important elements of your proposal, a budget provides the funding agency with an estimate of how much your project will cost, broken down into relevant budget categories. Typical budget categories are:

    1. *Personnel Costs* (salary and benefits) for each project participant for time spent on the project.

    2. *Contractor Costs* (costs to employ independent contractors for the project).

    3. *Materials Costs* (materials and supplies that will have to be purchased or rented specifically for the project).

    4. *Travel Costs* (airfare, lodging, meals, etc. if travel is involved).

    5. *Overhead Costs* (the ongoing district expenses such as rent, phones, computers, etc.) Typically, 10% of the amount of all items above is added to the grant request to cover overhead.

For a sample grant proposal, see Appendix M.

Other Proposal Elements Specific to Resource Conservation

Although the elements discussed above are what typically comprise a grant request, the type of grants RCDs frequently apply for often necessitate including additional information such as maps of project areas; letters of support for the project from partners, congressmen, county government, or any applicable partners or participants; or copies of district long-range plans. The RFP will include information on any special elements you may need to include with your submission. The rule, as always, is to follow the directions in the RFP closely and contact the funding agency if you have any questions.

GRANT/CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

In your effort to secure grant funding for your district you may not have taken time to think about what you will do when you actually receive a grant. There are two major tasks involved in implementing a project with grant funding:

1. Carrying out the project itself (project implementation)

2. Managing cash-flow and managing the information flow and other administrative tasks associated with the grant

The first part, project implementation, is discussed under Step 8, How to Manage RCD Daily Operations. Managing cash flow and other administrative tasks, are discussed below. For the purposes of the following discussion, “grant management” refers to the actions necessary to secure payments once a grant or contract is received (Invoicing) and keeping the funding agent up to date on your activities (Reporting).

Invoicing

Funding agencies differ in their policies on grant payments to districts. Some agencies will allow a district to request a majority of the grant award in advance to purchase materials and equipment to get started on the project. In this case a written justification for the advance is usually required.

Normally, grant or contract funds are dispersed quarterly and granting or contracting agencies are billed after the fact for purchases, travel expenses, and contract hours worked. Districts thus need to plan for cash-flow requirements until quarterly payments are received. If the district will need funds in the interim, while waiting for cash reimbursements, they might consider options such as applying for an advance against the amount awarded or short-term loans. Typically, however, you would bill the agency or foundation at the end of the first quarter of your project for all items purchased during the first quarter (with receipts or other evidence of payment submitted), all travel expenses incurred (with receipts and other documentation submitted), all employee/contractor hours worked, etc.

Note that all of these expense items must have been included on the final approved budget if you are going to charge these expenses to the grant. Granting agencies also have other requirements for invoicing that must be carefully considered when you are trying to secure quarterly payments (see Appendix P, Sample Grant Invoicing and Reporting Forms, for more information).

Reporting

Progress Reports

Requests for payment, usually on a quarterly basis, generally must be accompanied by progress or status reports that detail work on the grant to date. Grant and cost-share contracts usually spell out requirements for progress reports. The progress reports usually must reflect the expenses covered in the invoice. For example, if you requested funds to reimburse an employee's travel expenses (and included all necessary documentation with the invoice), then details of and the reason for the trip must be documented in the quarterly report.

Beyond providing a justification for spending, however, a progress report narrates interim findings or successes that the project has demonstrated to-date. Depending on the needs of the granting agency (and what must be included in your progress reports is generally provided to you) the contents of a progress report might include:

- A summary of the work completed during the reporting period.
- Interim findings or success stories to date.
- Challenges or opportunities encountered in executing the project.
- Percentage of project completion (in other words, is the progress on schedule for completion by the end date?).

- Narrative of how costs submitted in the invoice are justified by work accomplished or undertaken, including discussion of any deviations.

- Project photographs. If possible photos of pre-project, in-progress, and completion should be made for comparison.

(For more information on completing progress reports, see Appendix P, Sample Grant Invoicing and Reporting Forms).

Final Reports

Final reports are usually required in the grant/contract process. Requirements for the final report are generally included in the original contract you sign with the granting agency. This will include exact expectations for the contents of the final report. It is a good idea to become thoroughly familiar with these requirements at the beginning of the granting process because you will need to incorporate the requirements of the final report into the design of your project if you are to be able to report about it successfully once it is completed.

Even though final reports may be *required* by a grant contract, they also provide the grantee a chance to summarize the accomplishments or to state findings of the project. The final report you submit to the granting agency can be used when you write annual reports, newspaper and newsletter articles, or other publications, so they can be quite useful to you as well. *Note: whenever you publish reports or articles about projects receiving grant funds, you must be sure to mention the funding source for the grant in the text of the article or report.*

Requirements for final reports will vary from grant to grant but they usually include items such as the following:

- A brief summary of the organization, its mission and goals, the objectives of the project, and how these objectives were accomplished.

- A discussion of the amount awarded and how the funds were used.

- A discussion of any problems and/or concerns that may have arisen during the course of this project, and the corrective actions taken.

- Any findings, conclusions, or recommendations for follow-up or ongoing activities that might result from successful completion of the project.

- A statement, if applicable, of future intent of public and/or private support to maintain or further develop the project.

- A summary of project successes.

- Copies of all news articles and any other media coverage, as well as all promotional and educational materials produced as a result of the grant agreement.

- A request for final payment, which accompanies the final report but which is separate from the report itself.

The request for final payment is kept separate from the final report because the latter is often reproduced for other purposes, such as providing information to other interested parties. In line with this, funding agencies often require that all materials developed during the course of a grant project be subject to use by the granting agency and thus reproducible by the granting agency at will.[8] This pertains especially to final reports, which can contain important or relevant findings or a conclusion that might be widely disseminated and useful to others.

For information on issues related to writing final reports see Step 9, Writing Annual Reports. For a sample grant contract which includes requirements for final reports, see Appendix N.

[8] In addition, granting agencies often require that all materials the grantees produce for distribution be reviewed by the grant agency before they are distributed. Also, statements crediting the granting agency as funding source for the project are usually required to be included in any publications, news articles, press releases, flyers, evaluation forms, etc.